The Century Bible

Psalms Vol. I

W. T. Davison D.D.

Library of The Theological Seminary
PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY

FROM THE LIBRARY OF THE
REVEREND JOHN ALEXANDER MACKAY
LITT.D., D.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

BS
1430
.3
.D38
V.1

J. A. Mackay

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
MAR 7 1990
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
MAR 7 1901
CHECKED OUT

THE CENTURY BIBLE

*GENESIS, by the Rev. Prof. W. H. BENNETT, Litt.D., D.D.
EXODUS, by the Rev. Prof. W. H. BENNETT, Litt.D., D.D.
LEVITICUS AND NUMBERS, by the Rev. Prof. A. R. S. KENNEDY, M.A., D.D.
*DEUTERONOMY AND JOSHUA, by the Rev. Prof. H. WHEELER ROBINSON, M.A., B.D.
*JUDGES AND RUTH, by the Rev. G. W. THATCHER, M.A., B.D.
*I AND II SAMUEL, by the Rev. Prof. A. R. S. KENNEDY, M.A., D.D.
*I AND II KINGS, by the Rev. Prof. SKINNER, D.D.
*I AND II CHRONICLES, by the Rev. W. HARVEY-JELLIE, M.A., B.D.
EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER, by the Rev. Prof. T. WITTON DAVIES, B.A., Ph.D.
*JOB, by Prof. A. S. PEAKE, M.A., D.D.
*PSALMS (Vol. I) I TO LXXII, by the Rev. Prof. DAVISON, M.A., D.D.
*PSALMS (Vol. II) LXXIII TO END, by the Rev. Prof. T. WITTON DAVIES, B.A., Ph.D.
PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, AND SONG OF SOLOMON, by the Rev. Prof. G. CURRIE MARTIN, M.A., B.D.
*ISAIAH, by the Rev. Principal WHITEHOUSE, M.A., D.D.
ISAIAH XL-LXIII, by the Rev. Principal WHITEHOUSE, M.A., D.D.
JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS, by Prof. A. S. PEAKE, M.A., D.D.
*EZEKIEL, by the Rev. Prof. W. F. LOFTHOUSE, M.A.
DANIEL, by the Rev. Prof. R. H. CHARLES, D.D.
*MINOR PROPHETS: HOSEA, JOEL, AMOS, OBADIAH, JONAH, MICAH, by the Rev. R. F. HORTON, M.A., D.D.
*MINOR PROPHETS: NAHUM, HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, MALACHI, by the Rev. Canon DRIVER, Litt.D., D.D.

*1. MATTHEW, by the Rev. Prof. W. F. SLATER, M.A.
*2. MARK, by the late Principal SALMOND, D.D.
*3. LUKE, by Principal W. F. ADENEY, M.A., D.D.
*4. JOHN, by the Rev. J. A. McCLYMONT, D.D.
*5. ACTS, by the Rev. Prof. J. VERNON BARTLET, M.A., D.D.
*6. ROMANS, by the Rev. Prof. A. E. GARVIE, M.A., D.D.
*7. I AND II CORINTHIANS, by Prof. J. MASSIE, M.A., D.D.
*8. EPHESIANS, COLOSSIANS, PHILEMON, PHILIPPIANS, by the Rev. Prof. G. CURRIE MARTIN, M.A., B.D.
*9. I AND II THESSALONIANS, GALATIANS, by Principal W. F. ADENEY, M.A., D.D.
*10. THE PASTORAL EPISTLES, by the Rev. R. F. HORTON, M.A., D.D.
*11. HEBREWS, by Prof. A. S. PEAKE, M.A., D.D.
*12. THE GENERAL EPISTLES, by the Rev. Prof. W. H. BENNETT, Litt.D., D.D.
*13. REVELATION, by the Rev. C. ANDERSON SCOTT, M.A., B.D.

[*Those marked* are already published.*]

THE CENTURY BIBLE

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

I — LXXII

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
MAR 7 1990
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

OXFORD

HORACE HART, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

The Century Bible

General Editor:
Principal Walter F. Adeney, M.A., D.D.

The Psalms

I—LXXII

INTRODUCTION
REVISED VERSION WITH NOTES
AND INDEX

EDITED BY
REV. PROFESSOR DAVISON, M.A., D.D.
TUTOR IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, HANDSWORTH COLLEGE, BIRMINGHAM; AUTHOR OF 'THE PRAISES OF ISRAEL,' 'WISDOM-LITERATURE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT,' ETC.

VOL. I

EDINBURGH: T. C. & E. C. JACK
AND 16 HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.

The Revised Version *is printed by permission of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge*

CONTENTS

		PAGE
EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION		1
TEXT OF THE REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS		45
NOTES :	A. Names of God	358
	B. Use of the term 'Chasid'	360
	C. The Cherubim	361
INDEX		363

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

I — LXXII

INTRODUCTION

'Although all Divine Scripture doth breathe the grace of God, yet sweet beyond all others is the Book of Psalms.'

AMBROSE.

'Psalmody is the soul's fair weather, the arbiter of peace. It healeth the soul's ancient and inveterate wounds; . . . the sick it cherisheth, the whole it doth preserve. It softeneth the angry and doth sober the intemperate.'—BASIL.

'You may rightly call the Psalter a Bible in miniature.'

LUTHER.

'The choice and flower of all things profitable in other books the Psalms do both more briefly contain and more movingly express. . . . What is there necessary for man to know which the Psalms are not able to teach?'—HOOKER.

'The Psalms stand up like a pillar of fire and light in the history of the early world. They lift us at once into an atmosphere of religious thought which is the highest that man has ever reached. They come with all the characteristic affections and emotions of humanity, everything that is deepest, tenderest, most pathetic, most aspiring, along with all the plain realities of man's condition and destiny, into the presence of the living God.'—R. W. CHURCH.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

I — LXXII

INTRODUCTION

ACCORDING to the old interpreters, it is the province of Biblical Introduction to answer seven questions concerning the composition of each Book of the Bible—Who wrote it? When? Where? For what end? and the like. Such questions are always easier to ask than to answer; but in the case of the Psalms as understood by modern scholarship, the difficulties are peculiarly great, perhaps insuperable.

An attempt is made, however, to answer these questions as far as possible, partly in this general introduction, partly in the detailed introductions prefixed to the several Psalms. And, in the prevailing uncertainty and diversity of opinion, the author has tried to do two things—to give a general idea of the views accepted by recent critics, both the more conservative and the more advanced, and briefly to state his own opinion, without attempting to give his full reasons. Thus the reader will at the same time receive a measure of guidance, yet have some opportunity of judging for himself.

The notes appended to each Psalm are necessarily brief. Attention has largely been concentrated upon exegesis pure and simple, a discussion of the best translation available, with special emphasis upon the renderings of the Revised Version both in text and margin. The latter, it need hardly be said, forms an integral part of the Version, and is often more valuable than the text itself.

I. The Name and Character of the Book.

The Book of Psalms is a collection of a hundred and fifty sacred songs or poems, selected from Hebrew literature, extending over several centuries and arranged with care for a specific purpose. Ewald has said, 'We possess in the present Psalter the flower of the lyrical poetry of the Hebrews most suitable for public edification and instruction, out of all centuries from David down to the latest times.' If we change the phraseology into 'suitable for public worship and instruction,' with an emphasis on *worship*, the definition will be more accurate. The collection was not intended for worship alone, but that it is suited first and chiefly for the service of the temple is attested both by its character and its history.

The name by which it is known among the Jews is 'Praises' or 'Book of Praises,' but the word *Tehillim*, thus appropriately employed, is not the one recognized in the Book itself, only one Psalm (cxlv) being thus designated. Two other words, *Mizmor* and *Shir*, which are currently used in the titles, are better rendered by the English 'song': the former indicating a composition to be sung to a musical accompaniment, and the latter being a more general name, applicable as well to secular lyrics. The one name given in the Book itself to a collection of Psalms is 'prayers,' as in the note at the end of Ps. lxxii, 'The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.' The use of the word is significant, for a considerable proportion of the Psalms thus styled 'prayers of David' can hardly be described as direct invocations of God. But the spirit of the Psalter is one of prayer throughout, and a large part of its contents is prayer pure and simple. As Augustine in his *Confessions* writes, so to speak, on his knees, and reviews his whole life as in the sight of God, from time to time directly addressing Him, so the Psalmist, when rehearsing the history of Israel, or recalling his own experiences, or contemplating the glories of nature, has God ever in mind, and every line is perfumed with the

incense of supplication. Complaints lose all character of murmuring, and joy is hallowed into thanksgiving, when both are reverently uttered in the inner chamber and poured into the ear of a gracious God.

It would be a mistake to use any descriptive title for the Book which would narrow the breadth of its scope or the comprehensiveness of its range. It is didactic, lyric, elegiac, by turns; it is various as human life, and its main feature is the bringing of human history with all its joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, struggles and achievements, into the presence of God and the light of religion. The Book of Psalms is—itself. It refuses to be pressed exactly into any one of the categories which the ingenious classifiers of similar literary compositions have devised. Happily it has in English a distinctive name of its own, derived from the Greek, one by which through all time it will probably be distinguished.

The place occupied by the Book in the Canon of the Old Testament is this. The first portion of the Hebrew Scriptures to be collected and arranged was the 'Law,' comprising the five Books of the Pentateuch. Next, after the interval of a century, came the 'Prophets,' including the Books which we call historical, as well as those directly prophetical. To the third part of the Canon no distinctive name was given; it is known in Hebrew as *Kethubim*, 'writings,' in Greek as *Hagiographa*, 'sacred writings,' and in this portion the Psalter has usually occupied the first place in order, as for many reasons it is the most important. This is suggested by our Lord's words in Luke xxiv. 44, where he speaks of the things 'written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me.' Such a book obviously claims a position of its own in the Canon of sacred Scripture. As the Law is mainly the declaration of God's will concerning the duties of Israel, as the histories contain the account of His dealings with the chosen people, as prophecy is the inspired utterance of holy men speaking in His name, so

the Psalms exhibit the light of Israel's religion as reflected in the hearts and experience of its faithful sons. Thus 'what the heart is in man, the Psalter is in the Bible.'

II. Formation of the Psalter.

How came the Book to be what it is? What is the history of its compilation, or rather its growth, for a book of this kind possesses a life of its own, and cannot be artificially produced by any literary machinery or apparatus?

In the Hebrew Bible, as now in our Revised Version, the Psalms are divided into five Books, Pss. i–xlii, xliii–lxxii, lxxiii–lxxxix, xc–cvi, cvii–cl. This division was known in the Christian Church as early as the second century, and it obtained still earlier among the Jews. It is recognized in the Midrash, which compares the five Books of the Law given by Moses to the five Books of Psalms given by David. The close of each Book is marked by a doxology, a practice not uncommon in the East, as Prof. Robertson Smith has shown in the case of certain collections of Arabic poems. This division into five parts must have been made early, because it is substantially recognized in the LXX Version. But it does not follow that it was made when the Psalter was first formed, still less that it corresponds exactly to successive stages in the history of the collections. There are indeed several evidences to the contrary.

Closer examination reveals indications of a gradual formation out of existing collections on somewhat different lines. We may point first to the 'editorial note,' as it may be called, appended to Ps. lxxii. It shows that at this point ends a certain collection of 'Davidic' compositions, and the writer knew of no other Psalms which went by the name of David. Another practical proof lies in the existence of duplicate forms of the same Psalm: compare Ps. xiv with liii, xl. 13–17 with lxx, and cviii with lvii. 7–11 and lx. 5–12. The conclusion we should draw

from the latter fact is strengthened when we observe that with substantially the same subject-matter a different name for God is used; the same Psalm being therefore used on different occasions by different editors in arranging independent collections. This variation in the name of God cannot be quite satisfactorily accounted for, but it is certain it does not occur by chance. In Book I the name Yahweh (Jehovah) occurs 272 times, Elohim only 15 times; while in Book II Elohim is found 164 times and Yahweh only 30 times. In Book III the names are more evenly distributed; but it is found that if the Book be divided into two parts at Ps. lxxxiii, a similar division into Yahwistic and Elohistic sections is discernible, while in Books IV and V the name Yahweh decidedly predominates.

Other indications of gradual compilation are found in the titles, which will be more fully discussed in the next section. It is sufficient here to observe that almost all the Psalms in Book I are assigned to David, a group of eight Korahitic Psalms occurs in Pss. xlii–xlix, and eleven Asaphic Psalms in lxxii–lxxxiii. Another group of 'Davidic' compositions is found in Pss. li–lxx, while from Ps. xc onwards titles are rare, the Psalms being for the most part what the Jews called 'orphans'—as we say, anonymous. The subscription to Ps. lxxii, 'The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended,' is now appended to a Book which contains Psalms assigned to Asaph and the sons of Korah, but Ewald's conjecture has been generally accepted that Pss. xlii–l once stood after the Psalm now numbered lxxii. The following represents in outline the history of the formation of the Psalter, as far as it is possible for us to conjecture and reproduce it.

1. The earliest collection consisted of Pss. iii–xli: it was formed soon after the Exile, but contained many earlier compositions, probably from the time of David onwards.

2. Another 'Davidic' collection, Pss. li–lxxii, with the subscription lxxii. 20.

3. Certain Levitical collections, Pss. xlii–xlix being Korahitic, l and lxxiii–lxxxiii Asaphic, lxxxiv–lxxxviii Korahitic, and lxxxix 'of Ethan.'

4. A process of arrangement of (2) and (3), perhaps by an Elohistic editor, Pss. lxxxiv–lxxxix being added as a Yahwistic supplement.

5. Sundry short, independent groups or collections of Psalms are discernible, of which the Hallel, Pss. cxi–cxviii, and the Songs of Ascents, cxx–cxxxiv, are specimens.

6. From these, together with a considerable number of scattered Psalms, a large and generally homogeneous collection was formed, including Pss. xc–cl, the greater part of which were composed for purposes of public worship.

7. Thus far we find the Psalter divided into three parts, viz. Pss. i–xli, xlii–lxxxix, xc–cl. At a later stage the division into five Books was effected, a break being made at Ps. lxxii and again at cvi, suitable doxologies being arranged at the close of each. It is not possible to be sure what portion of the editing—e.g. the prefixing of Ps. i and the affixing of doxologies—was done at the formation of the smaller groups and what at the final stage; nor is it easy to say how far Psalms of comparatively late origin may have been inserted in collections formed earlier.

Such an outline is necessarily speculative in character. But good reasons may be assigned for marking out each one of the lines of cleavage indicated; and the history of later hymn-books, e.g. 'Wesley's Hymns,' 'Hymns Ancient and Modern,' and Sankey's collection, presents similar phenomena on a humbler scale.

The present arrangement, therefore, is chronological only in broadest outline. For the most part, the earlier Psalms and collections are placed first, and personal Psalms occur as a rule earlier in the Psalter, while those dealing with national history or expressly composed for liturgical purposes are found in the later Books. But all such principles of association—if they may be called

principles—are vague in character and loosely applied. Sufficient has been said to show that the collection had a long history, some features of which it is possible to recognize. It is not surprising if this history cannot now be exactly traced, and it would be a mistake to suppose that all the details of arrangement were carried out by rule. But the study of the last fifty years has done more to elucidate the subject than previous centuries, and it is not improbable that more light still may be shed upon it ere long.

When did the final process of collection begin? Assuming for the moment that as there were many sacred poems already in existence, so some of these *may* have been previously gathered into smaller collections not now traceable, and taking the Psalter as we have it, the first division containing Pss. i–xli must be post-Exilic. The evidence, as drawn from Pss. i, xiv, xxv and others, will be pointed out in the notes. It is also independently probable that at such a period, shortly after the return from captivity, some such work would be undertaken.

It is not easy to say when the process ended, i.e. to fix the limit beyond which no addition was made. But there are data which enable us to determine with some certainty the period when this work was practically complete. For example:—

1. The passage 1 Macc. vii. 17, written about 100 B.C., quotes Ps. lxxix as Scripture. This implies that the Psalm had been for some time included in a recognized collection.

2. The prologue to the Book of Ecclesiasticus, written B.C. 132, cites the fact that in the time of the writer's grandfather, Jesus the Son of Sirach (about 180 B.C.), a division of the Scriptures into a kind of threefold Canon, 'the law, the prophets and the other books of our fathers,' was recognized, and a Greek translation of these books was current in his own time. That is, as Prof. Robertson Smith has said, 'the Hebrew Psalter was completed and

recognized as an authoritative collection long enough before 130 B.C. to allow of its passing to the Hellenistic Jews of Alexandria.'

3. The recent discovery of the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus has brought to light a passage in which several Psalms (cxxi, cxxxv, cxlviii, and others) are either imitated or quoted *verbatim*.

4. The evidence of 1 Chron. xvi shows that the writer (about 300 B.C.) had before him Pss. cv, xcvi and cvi, considerable portions of which he incorporates into his text.

5. The fact that the Greek translators (say about 160 B.C.) did not understand the musical and other notes prefixed to the Psalms shows that at that time these must have been ancient. This is confirmed by the absence of titles which marks the later portion of the Psalter.

6. The processes of collecting, arranging, prefixing titles, appending editorial notes and translating into Greek—which implies that the authority of the books translated was fairly well established—demand a considerable period for their accomplishment before the final result was reached.

7. Certain other Psalms have come down to us, known as 'Psalms of Solomon' or 'Psalms of the Pharisees,' the date of which can be fixed with tolerable certainty as about 60 B.C. The difference between these and the latest compositions in the Psalter is very great. Their tone on such subjects as the Messiah, the doctrine of angels and a future life, makes it certain that a very considerable interval of time must have elapsed for such change of beliefs to have come about. Prof. Kirkpatrick says that 'they are separated from the Psalter by an impassable gulf.'

In the light of these facts—to which sufficient weight has hardly been attached by the less conservative critics—it would appear most likely that the Psalter was practically complete by 180 B.C., or thereabouts. This is not intended

to prejudge the question as to the admission of Maccabaean Psalms, on which something will be said later. It does, however, preclude the attempts recently made to assign a considerable portion of the Psalter—according to one or two critics nearly the whole—to the period B.C. 160–150. The process of collection then appears to have ranged through about three centuries from 450 to 180 B.C.

III. The Titles.

Prefixed to a large number of Psalms, especially in the first half of the Book, are certain inscriptions, or notes, or titles. These do not form a part of the Psalm itself, but were added, though in comparatively ancient times. Some of them indicate authorship, directly or indirectly, others refer to time of composition, while many have to do with the musical setting of the Psalm for worship.

One Psalm (xc) is attributed to Moses, seventy-three to David (fifty-five of these in the first two Books), two to Solomon, twelve to Asaph, eleven to the sons of Korah, one to Heman, and one to Ethan. The LXX Version ascribes twelve more Psalms to David than does the Hebrew, while others are attributed to Jeremiah, Haggai, and Zechariah.

It is not certain that the preposition translated 'of' means 'composed by.' It may mean this, and in many cases is evidently intended to do so. But this can hardly be supposed when the 'sons of Korah' are named, and it is clear that some latitude must be allowed. It is particularly to be observed that it was a later rule amongst the Jews that a Psalm without the name of an author was to be ascribed to the author named in the Psalm nearest preceding, and it is very likely that in a collection generally named 'of David' all Psalms would be ascribed to him, and these would bear his name if transferred to another collection, or used by another editor. The writer of Ps. lxxii. 20 knew of a certain collection as 'prayers of

David,' and any Psalm from this or any similar collection would naturally come to be known as a Psalm 'of David' and would be so quoted, e.g. Ps. cviii. In Heb. iv. 7 the whole Psalter is described as 'David'; and the book called 'Wesley's Hymns' from the first contained some compositions by other authors, many of them edited and modified by John Wesley himself, whilst in later editions the proportion of Charles Wesley's hymns has been decidedly diminished.

It is noticeable that no author is named after the time of Solomon, and that in 2 Chron. xxix. 30 it is said that Hezekiah commanded the Levites to praise the Lord 'with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer.' The fact that in the LXX some of these titles are combined in an inconsistent way shows, as do a few of the Hebrew titles, that traditions were preserved, even when they were not understood.

Examination of these titles shows that their evidence is generally uncritical, in many cases quite misleading, and as a whole is of little value. A number of Psalms attributed to David were certainly not written by him, and in the case of many others the probabilities are decidedly against such a supposition. The Aramaisms, or debased Hebrew, of Ps. cxxxix, the tame and composite character of such Psalms as lxxxvi, put Davidic authorship out of the question. Acrostics such as Pss. xxv, xxxiv and xxxvii can hardly have been his. It is questionable whether the use of the word translated 'temple,' e.g. in Pss. v and xxvii, is not decisive against Davidic authorship, and similar doubt exists in relation to the phrase 'holy hill.' But the decision does not turn upon the use of single expressions. The reader has only to consider carefully the whole situation described, or implied, in the majority of 'Davidic' Psalms, to see that they are not suitable to David at all, either as a fugitive from Saul or as a victorious monarch and founder of a dynasty. Pss. xx and xxi refer to a king, but were

almost certainly not written by a king. Many Psalms describe the fearfulness of a sufferer under an oppressive government such as David could never have felt, and it requires serious straining of language to make some of the Psalms supposed to be written during Saul's persecution to fit the situation at all. And in other cases, whilst certain expressions in a Psalm might have been used by David—e.g. Pss. lv. 12, 13 in relation to Ahithophel—other parts of it would have been quite inappropriate in his lips.

Some of the Psalms 'of Asaph' (lxxiv, lxxix, lxxx) obviously refer to the destruction of Jerusalem or to the Exile, if not to a later period, while at least some of those attributed to David must have been written in whole or in part after the return from captivity.

Under these circumstances we conclude that for the determination of authorship the titles are quite untrustworthy. It does not follow, however, that they are useless. The phrase 'of the sons of Korah' almost certainly points to a collection of Psalms bearing that name, either written or preserved by members of the Levitical guild or family of Korah, and the name of Asaph may be similarly used. And the title 'of Solomon' attached to Pss. lxxii and cxxvii may point to the fact that the mention of 'the king's son' and the 'building of the house' suggested Solomon's name.

Some thirteen titles refer to the occasion on which the Psalm was supposed to be written, and these all refer to David. Eight Psalms—vii, xxxiv, lii, liv, lvi, lvii, lix and cxlii—are assigned to the time of Saul's persecution; Pss. xviii and lx to his victories; Ps. li to his great sin; Pss. iii and lxiii to his flight from Absalom. On this the most that can be said is that in some cases there is a probability in the theory of the title, while in other cases the supposition is wellnigh impossible. Each case will be discussed in the introduction to the Psalm in question.

The titles which refer to the musical setting or liturgical use of the Psalms require separate consideration. Two of the most common phrases found in the Psalms—the latter not in the titles—are **For the chief Musician** and **Selah.** The former is found fifty-five times, almost entirely in the first three Books. It is tolerably certain that the word here used means the precentor or conductor of the temple-choir, whilst the meaning of the preposition is not so clear. It has usually been understood to indicate that the Psalm was intended for use in the temple services. It has been objected, however, that in that case we might expect to find it frequently prefixed to the later Psalms, as these are eminently liturgical in character, and that 'for' should be rendered 'of,' and understood to mean that the Psalm in question belonged to an older book known as 'The Precentor's Collection.' This argument from silence in the later Books would, however, prove too much, since almost all musical notation is absent from Books IV and V. The proof which the word affords of the close connexion between the Psalms and the worship of the temple remains the same in either case.

The word 'Selah' is found seventy-one times in the Psalter, usually only once or twice in each Psalm, though occasionally oftener. Most of the Psalms in which it occurs are in the earlier Books, and nearly all are of those marked 'For the Precentor.' It is now generally agreed that Selah is a musical term, a direction as to the style of the interlude or accompaniment to be played by instruments at the point in question. The Greek translation *diapsalma* points in this direction, but some other versions and the ancient Jewish traditions give the meaning 'for ever,' which has no etymological support and is probably erroneous. The word furnishes another illustration of the obscurity which early gathered round the musical notation of the Jews, but we shall probably not be far wrong if we understand Selah as a direction to the musicians to strike up more loudly during an interval of singing, or

while the singing proceeded. It has also been suggested that the direction was rather to singers than players, and that at the point marked by the word, the congregation were to chant a response or a benediction. When the instances in which Selah occurs are carefully examined, it is very difficult to generalize—to perceive, that is, any special features which the passages have in common, which would make an interlude or a 'forte' accompaniment appropriate. The word does indeed almost always occur at the end of a stanza. **Higgaion** occurs once with Selah (Ps. ix. 16), and in Ps. xcii. 3 is translated 'a solemn sound.' It has been understood to mean 'joyfully resounding music,' but more probably refers to solemn, meditative strains.

Neginoth, six times in the Psalter (compare Neginah in Ps. lxi and Hab. iii. 19), indicates, as the Revised Version shows, an accompaniment of stringed instruments, while **Nehiloth** in Ps. v means wind instruments or 'to the accompaniment of flutes.' **Alamoth,** Ps. xlvi, which appears to be connected with the Hebrew word for 'maiden' and to correspond to our 'soprano,' is perhaps best understood of an instrument, a viola or tenor-violin; just as **Sheminith** in Pss. vi and xii, which means eighth or lower octave, would mean an instrument corresponding to our violoncello or double-bass. **Gittith** also in Pss. viii, lxxxi, lxxxiv was understood by the Targum to mean 'belonging to Gath,' and to refer to an instrument of a particular shape or type. The view is now preferred that it is the name of a tune, perhaps originally that of a vintage-song, to which the Psalm was sung.

Some phrases in the titles are probably names of tunes or popular airs which came to be known by name, according to the opening words of the secular songs with which they were associated. Prof. W. R. Smith has adduced parallels to this practice from the Arabic, and it is familiar enough amongst ourselves. It is not long since a well-known hymn used to be sung to the tune of 'Ye

banks and braes.' The following are specimens of such titles: **Aijeleth-hash-Shahar,** Ps. xxii, 'The hind of the dawn'; **Al-Tashheth,** Pss. lvii, lviii, lix, lxxv, 'Destroy not'—possibly the beginning of a vintage-song (compare Isa. lxv. 8, 'Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it'); **Jonath-elem-re'hokim,** Ps. lvi, 'The dove of the distant terebinths'; **Muth-labben,** Ps. ix, is a difficult phrase to render, either with the accepted pointing or with any other. It might conceivably mean 'Die for the son' or 'Death makes white,' but it is enough to explain it as the name of a tune. **Mahalath** in Ps. liii and **Mahalath Leannoth** in Ps. lxxxviii are understood by the Revised Version in the same sense.

Maschil is found prefixed to thirteen Psalms, chiefly in Books II and III. It has usually been understood to mean a 'didactic' Psalm, as it seems to be derived from a root which signifies 'to be wise' or 'to instruct.' But the Psalms which it introduces are not specially didactic or contemplative, and the 'skilfulness' which the word indicates may more probably be referred to the elaborate character of the musical accompaniment. The same may be true of **Michtam** (Pss. xvi and lvi–lx; compare also Isa. xxxviii. 9), which has been connected with one root which means 'gold,' and with another which means to 'inscribe.' But the fact that the 'Michtam' Psalms have few features in common points to an interpretation which applies to the music rather than to the subject-matter. **Shiggaion,** again, derived from a root 'to wander'—see Ps. vii and compare Hab. iii. 1—has been understood by Ewald and Delitzsch to mean a dithyrambic song, one characterized by much variety of feeling or irregularity of construction. But a musical reference is more probable. Ps. xlv has a fivefold title. Some of the phrases have already been explained. **A Song of Loves** probably means a song concerning that which is lovely, or, as the first verse expresses it, 'my matter is goodly.' **Shoshannim** means 'lilies'; compare **Shushan Eduth,**

'Lily of the testimony,' in Ps. lx. Both these inscriptions probably refer to tunes.

Some of the titles refer to the liturgical use of the Psalms in question. The meaning of **the Dedication of the House** in Ps. xxx is discussed in its place, but it is not improbably a later addition of a liturgical kind. So with **to bring to remembrance** or 'to make memorial' in Pss. xxxviii and lxx. This phrase refers to the *Azkarah* or offering of incense, and the Psalm of thanksgiving (Ps. c) to be sung at the time of thank-offering. **To teach** in Ps. lx may mean that the Psalm was to be carefully learned and recited, as is said of Moses' song in Deut. xxxi. 19 and the martial song of 2 Sam. i. 17, 18.

There remain the Pss. cxx–cxxxiv, called in A. V. 'Songs of Degrees,' in R. V. **Songs of Ascents**, a title probably given in the first instance to a small collection of Psalms made for a special purpose, since the plural word 'Ascents' is used for each several Psalm and represents the name originally given to the whole group. The word has been variously explained. We may reject without much hesitation the theory that these Psalms were sung upon the fifteen steps which led from the court of the women to the court of Israel in the second temple; as well as that which refers the 'ascent' to the 'step-like' literary structure of each Psalm, in which each verse forms a kind of advance by taking up a word or phrase from its predecessor and repeating it with emphasis or additions. The two most probable explanations of 'ascents' refer to the 'going up' from Babylon, or return to Palestine from the Exile, see Ezra vii. 9; and the 'going up' to Jerusalem from the country at the times of the great festivals; in each case the songs in question being sung upon the journey. The fact that the same word is used of the return from Babylon is in favour of the former theory, whilst the plural form of the word favours the latter. Amongst moderns the latter view is most generally accepted.

An early Jewish tradition informs us that in the worship of the second temple a special Psalm was sung on each day of the week at the time of the offering of the morning sacrifice. The only indication that we have of this custom in the Hebrew is found in the title of Ps. xcii, which is said to be 'a Song for the Sabbath Day.' But in the LXX Version the special Psalm of the first day of the week is the twenty-fourth, of the second day the forty-eighth; whilst the ninety-fourth was sung on the fourth day and the ninety-third on the sixth day of the week. The Psalms for the other days may be gathered from the Mishna—the eighty-second Psalm being assigned to the third day and the eighty-first to the fifth day of the week.

On the whole subject of the titles it may be said that, whilst not contemporaneous with the Psalms themselves, they are of ancient origin and give valuable information of more kinds than one. They are not to be relied upon for the ascertaining of date or authorship, but they help considerably in the attempt to understand the earlier grouping of the Psalms, and, as Prof. Robertson Smith said, 'their combined evidence is strong enough to prove that in both Davidic collections, or at least in the first, there is a substantial element that really goes back to David.'

The fact that some of the technical words are used in other Books—see 1 Chron. xv. 20, 21 and Hab. iii. 1 and 19—while titles generally are wanting in Books IV and V of the Psalter, and were not understood by the Greek translators, is of some service in determining their date. But the obscurity which still surrounds the meaning of many of the terms employed makes it impossible to rest any great weight of argument upon their use.

IV. Date and Authorship.

The fixing of the date of a collection obviously takes us but a little way in determining the age, still less the authorship, of each individual Psalm. The final collection

must be subsequent to the date of the latest Psalm, but the earliest may be centuries older. Since the evidence of the titles has proved to be uncritical and untrustworthy, we are driven to other sources to ascertain approximately the time and circumstances of the composition of the Psalms severally.

The evidence available is partly external, partly internal, but neither is as helpful or conclusive as we could wish. It is part of the excellence of the Psalter as a book of devotion for all time, that the writers did not give to their prayers and praises a closely local and historical character, or crowd them with strictly personal experiences. The references to events are vague and general: it is almost amusing to observe the diversity of times and incidents to which different commentators find allusion in the same Psalm. Then the habit of modifying the phraseology of a Psalm to suit a fresh occasion, or of adding verses for liturgical purposes, must not be forgotten. Traces of such modification are not scanty in the Psalter as we have it, and if, as is probable, the sacred songs had been orally handed on for generations, the original must have been considerably altered before it reached its final form.

Unfortunately also, the evidence of language does not afford much help. The Hebrew of the Old Testament, in the hands of the Massoretic scribes who settled the received text as it has come down to us, introduced a large measure of uniformity into the usage, spelling and vocalization of the words. A progress in the language of the Old Testament writings is discernible, but the changes represent only what may be called linguistic colouring, and apart from the approximation in later times of the Hebrew to the kindred Western Aramaic dialect, it is difficult to apply the test of language to prove an earlier or later date.

There are, however, a number of general considerations adducible which at least enable us to form a general idea of the period within which we may range the composition

of the Psalms. Other specimens of Hebrew poetry have come down to us. The song of Moses in Exod. xv is acknowledged by most critics to be in substance Mosaic, though additions appear to have been made to it before it was inserted in the Elohistic narrative. The 'song of Moses' in Deut. xxxii is generally assigned to the eighth century B.C. The song of Deborah in Judges v is described even by the more advanced critics as probably contemporaneous with the events it describes. The song of Hannah in 1 Sam. ii probably belongs to the earlier period of the Monarchy, while the lament over Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam. i is allowed to be genuinely Davidic. Other relics of Hebrew lyrical poetry are the thanksgiving of Isa. xii, the dirge of Hezekiah in Isa. xxxviii, the prayer of Habakkuk in Hab. iii and that of Jonah in Jonah ii. These poems may with some confidence be said to illustrate the general character of poetical composition in the period from Hezekiah to the Exile, though some critics, especially in the two latter cases, are disposed to date them after the Exile. The Book of Lamentations was written in all probability soon after the Exile, not by Jeremiah, but by more than one author. It forms, however, a poetical composition of a very elaborate character. The acrostics it contains represent an advanced period of poetical art, and it is not unlikely that a portion of the Book was composed during the Babylonish captivity.

Additional evidence concerning the history of religious poetry in Israel may be gathered from such passages as Ps. cxxxvii, where the captives are represented as being asked to sing 'one of the songs of Zion,' and Isa. lxiv. 11, in which we read that the 'holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire.' In Jer. xxxiii. 11 we find a most interesting quotation from the hymns in which the praises of God were thus sung. In describing the coming restoration of the city and the temple, Jeremiah says that again shall be heard the voice of bridegroom and of bride and 'the voice of them that

say, Give thanks to the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that bring sacrifices of thanksgiving into the house of the Lord.' The language here quoted as that of the sanctuary in Jeremiah's time corresponds exactly to the thanksgivings of what are generally recognized as the later liturgical Psalms, e.g. Pss. cvi, cxxxvi, &c. More general references to the existence and use of sacred songs in connexion with the religious festivals may be found in Isa. xxx. 29, Amos v. 23, and elsewhere.

The Books of Chronicles furnish evidence of their own which can only be briefly and generally described here. These Books, dating from the fourth century B.C., present the views of the time with regard to the history of the temple-worship. It may be granted that the writer does not exhibit, perhaps did not aim at, historical accuracy in the modern sense of the phrase, the numbers cited being in some instances incredibly large. But it is clear that the compiler had access to earlier authorities, and the traditions of his own time possess a weight and significance of their own, even if it be understood that there was a disposition then—as there has always been in the history of religion—to antedate the origin of institutions esteemed sacred and authoritative. The evidence of the Chronicler, while it must not be pressed in detail, at least goes to show that about 330 B.C. the temple-worship had been highly elaborated, and its arrangements were so sacred and time-honoured that there was a disposition to ascribe them to David himself.

From all this it may be certainly gathered that at the time of the Exile religious poetry amongst the Jews exhibited the characteristics of an advanced and fairly matured art. That before the Exile the worship of God in the temple was maintained with praise and thanksgiving very similar to that which is contained in the Psalter. That for centuries before this, songs, both sacred and secular, had been composed, specimens of which have

come down to us. But in proportion as we travel back in the literature, evidence on this matter becomes comparatively scanty, and the poetical compositions which certainly belong to the period before the eighth century B. C. are few, whilst even these may have been modified in process of transmission. It must be remembered in addition, however, that Eastern oral tradition, especially in the matter of poetry, is tenacious and conservative, and that it is quite credible that songs, whether directly religious or not, were composed early and faithfully handed on for some generations before they were definitively embodied in extant literature.

That a considerable number of Psalms are at least pre-Exilic seems obvious if the natural and obvious interpretation of the words is admitted. Those which directly refer to the king must be so, unless one of two or three far-fetched explanations be admissible. The application of the term 'king' to Judas Maccabaeus or Simon would be scouted as impossible, were such a supposition necessary to prove the early date of a Psalm. Equally incredible is the theory that after the Exile the nation was styled 'king,' just as Israel was sometimes called the 'son' or 'servant' of Jehovah. The cases are clearly not parallel, and such straining of language should not be permitted by sound criticism. Pss. ii, xviii, xx, xxi, xlv, lxxii, and others may accordingly stand as representative of pre-Exilic psalmody, and they correspond in style and character with other poetical compositions of the period of the Monarchy. It is not so easy, however, to assign any of them to a particular reign, or even to a century. It is natural to associate the language of Ps. xlvi, and perhaps of xlviii and lxxvi, with the deliverance of Jerusalem at the time of Sennacherib's invasion, and some of the phraseology used suits that notable event better than any other the record of which has come down to us. Pss. ii and xlv again may be much more easily and naturally interpreted of a king in the earlier or middle period of

the Monarchy than of any subsequent time: and while it is quite possible that a later poet has dramatized and idealized the situation, such a view ought not to be adopted if there be no signs of a later hand in its literary composition. The period of Jeremiah, again, is one to which a considerable number of Psalms may with great probability be referred, even if none are the composition of the prophet himself.

The chief point of interest with many readers, however, is concerned with the name of David. Is it to be understood, men are asking, that whereas for centuries it was believed that David wrote with his own hand a considerable portion of the Psalter, so considerable that the whole Book was called by his name, now there is not even a single Psalm of which we may be sure that it has come from his hand? The facts are even so. But it must be added that the difficulty lies in establishing the *certainty* of Davidic authorship. Probabilities will be differently estimated. A few distinguished scholars refuse to allow a pre-Exilic date to any of the Psalms, and Prof. Driver holds 'with tolerable confidence that very few of the Psalms are earlier than the seventh century B. C.' Many, however, are still persuaded, not only that a goodly proportion of the Psalms in the earlier Books are pre-Exilic, but that many have come from the pen of David himself. This view is held, however, as an opinion based upon the probabilities of the case, not as by any means demonstrable with the amount of evidence at our disposal. As the subject is important, it may be examined a little more closely.

In favour of the Davidic authorship of some Psalms, it may be said that the ancient and persistent tradition ought to count for something. It is not necessary for this purpose to contend that the title 'of David' always implies the tradition that David wrote the Psalm in question. But that in many cases it must have meant this to the writer of the note is obvious, for the occasion

is often specified. And we have seen that the Chronicler habitually refers to David as the founder of psalmody. The Davidic authorship of the elegy in 2 Sam. i is not denied, but it is said that David wrote no sacred poems. The description in 1 Sam. xvi. 18 of the son of Jesse as 'cunning in playing' does not, it is true, imply skill in poetical composition, nor does the lament for Abner in 2 Sam. iii. 33, nor the description of David before the ark in 2 Sam. vi. 14, take us far in that direction. Nor can the description of David given in 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, translated in both A. V. and R. V. as 'the sweet Psalmist of Israel,' be relied upon to prove that the writer regarded David as a Psalmist. The phrase may be rendered literally, 'pleasant in the songs of Israel' (see R. V. marg.), and may mean no more than is told us in 1 Sam. vii. 18, that David as a hero was celebrated in popular song. The context, however, seems to imply that more than this was in the mind of the writer, who must not be taken to be the compiler of the main portion of the narrative of the Book. Amos vi. 5, moreover, speaks only of 'those who devise for themselves instruments of music like David,' and on any interpretation this passage does nothing to prove that David was a writer of Psalms.

None the less, the tradition was early and persistent, and it should not be set on one side without due cause shown. A clear proof of this is found in 2 Sam. xxii, where a Psalm practically identical with Ps. xviii is ascribed to David. Granting that this appendix to the second Book of Samuel cannot claim the date and authority which attaches to the main portion of the Book, still its evidence is valuable, and it seems likely that the brief introduction to the Psalm describing the occasion is taken from the historical Book. There is nothing in the Psalm itself directly inconsistent with Davidic authorship. A portion of the Psalm, it is true, appears to fit a later date better, including verses 49 and 50 which make mention of David by name. The details will be discussed

in the notes upon the Psalm itself, but here it may be said that those who assign a much later date to the composition are constrained to admit that the writer has thrown himself with great skill and success into the position of David at the time described, and several who are chary of ascribing any Psalms to David are disposed to make an exception in this case.

It may be added that in addition to the existence of ancient tradition, and the direct testimony of 2 Sam. xxii, the proved existence of early fragments of sacred song and the admitted Davidic authorship of the song in 2 Sam. i make it *a priori* probable that this tradition is well based, and it is unlikely that all the sacred poems of so distinguished a writer have disappeared. The objection that David was a warrior and therefore could not have been a Psalmist, or that his lapse into sin in the matter of Bath-sheba and Uriah makes it impossible that he could have written in a spiritual and devotional strain, will not bear close examination. It is not argument first to reject all alleged Davidic Psalms and then to say that, since David is represented only as a secular hero, he could not have been a sacred poet; but some such reasoning in a circle is unfortunately not a rare phenomenon. The real strength of the case against Davidic Psalms lies not in what Prof. Cheyne calls 'the history of art'—for it is easily conceivable, if it be not actually proved, that poetry in Israel had made considerable advance in the time of David—but from 'the history of religion,' as he and others have conceived it. Granted that the religious history of Israel was what many modern critics assert, it becomes absolutely necessary to bring down the date of the Psalms to a comparatively late period. But that is the very point at issue. It cannot be discussed here, but those who study carefully what may be called 'the necessary presuppositions,' i. e. the religious condition of Israel implied in the writings of the prophets Hosea and Amos, the dates of whose prophecies are

known, will probably come to the conclusion that religious knowledge was further advanced in the ninth and tenth centuries B.C. than many modern critics are willing to admit.

But we are brought to this point at last—that while there are strong probabilities that David wrote Psalms, that these have not all perished and that some of them are found in the Psalter, it is impossible to mark out any —if the evidence of 2 Sam. xxii be rejected—of which we may say that David and no other is certainly its author. Even if Ps. xviii be assuredly his, we have only literary probability—a notoriously inconclusive argument—to go upon to carry us further. Amongst recent critics and commentators, Duhm may be said to represent one extreme in his contention that few Psalms are older than the Maccabaean period, whilst Cheyne and others place the earliest considerably after the Exile. The other extreme, represented by Delitzsch in his earlier years, would assign forty or fifty Psalms to David's pen. Dr. Driver is content to fall back upon a *non liquet*, though, as stated above, he does not incline to an early date for any Psalms; while Prof. Kirkpatrick, proceeding with the combined caution and freedom which becomes sound scholarship, does not hesitate to take up a much more conservative position and assigns a considerable number of Psalms to David and the period immediately after him. The present writer, as will appear from the notes that follow, is inclined to think the truth lies somewhere between the conclusions of the two last-named eminent English scholars. But it may be said with confidence that all determinations of date must with our present evidence be regarded as approximate only, while the limits which a sound and moderate criticism assigns to hypothesis enable us to form an estimate sufficiently near for all practical purposes of exegesis and edification.

The question whether any Psalms belonging to the Maccabaean period are found in the Psalter has been

much debated, and it cannot be said that it is even yet finally determined by general agreement. According to some critics, as already said, we owe to this stirring epoch in Jewish history a large portion of the Book of Psalms, and there can be little question that the events of the Maccabaean rising were such as to call forth Psalms similar to many in the Psalter, if inspired lyrists were forthcoming to write them. What we know of the period makes this not improbable, and it is quite possible that the collection was not so absolutely closed, say by 150 B.C., that no additional Psalms could be inserted after this date. But when we turn to the actual conditions, as far as we can trace them, difficulties arise which these general considerations do not dissipate. The Psalms which from internal evidence alone we should be disposed to class as Maccabaean are xliv, lxxiv, lxxix and lxxxiii, and from very early times this has been recognized by interpreters. If these had been found towards the end of the fifth Book without titles there would be little difficulty. But they are found in the second and third Books, and one of them is described both in the original Hebrew and in the Greek translation as 'a Psalm of Asaph.' It is difficult to understand how a Psalm written so late as B.C. 150 could be found in such a place under such circumstances. Hence the opponents of the Maccabaean date urge that the language of the Psalms in question might well be understood of earlier times of desolation. This may be true of parts of these Psalms, but there are isolated expressions, such as the reference to synagogues in Ps. lxxiv. 8, which would seem to necessitate a later date. Prof. Cheyne, who is in this country the strongest advocate of Maccabaean Psalms, has enumerated four criteria by means of which these may be determined. Three of these tests unfortunately are too vague to be of much use: 'a uniquely strong church feeling, an intensity of monotheistic faith, and an ardour of gratitude for some unexampled stepping forth of the one Lord Jehovah into history.' The fourth is the

test which we would fain apply in this and all similar cases: 'some fairly distinct allusions to Maccabaean circumstances; I mean expressions which lose half their meaning when interpreted of other times.' It is such distinct allusions, in the sense of decisive historical references, which are notably lacking throughout the Psalter. An examination of the best and most recent commentaries will show that modern scholars are not convinced that many allusions are to be found in any Psalm so decidedly Maccabaean that they would 'lose half their meaning' if interpreted of other periods, and Prof. Cheyne in some of his applications and interpretations stands absolutely alone.

Under these circumstances there is nothing to be done but to pronounce the question still open. It would, in the writer's opinion, be a mistake to close the door against the possibility—nay, the probability—of Davidic Psalms at one end of the historic line and of Maccabaean Psalms at the other. But he also holds that the number belonging to either class is not very large, and that it is impossible to be certain as to how many each class contains, but that the approximate results which have been attained in both cases are sufficient for all practical purposes of interpretation.

On the whole subject it may be said at this stage that if some disappointment be felt at this absence from the Psalms of definite historical marks, and the consequent measure of uncertainty regarding authorship, there are compensating advantages on the other side. Most readers would like to be sure that David wrote Pss. xxiii and li; Ps. lxix would acquire fresh interest if it were known to be written by Jeremiah in his dungeon; and both Ps. lxxiv and the period of Judas Maccabaeus would be illuminated if we could certainly associate them together. Much controversy concerning Ps. cx would be ended could it be known without doubt either that David wrote it, or that Nathan wrote it concerning David, or that it belongs

to a much later period. It is not a mere question of satisfying a natural curiosity. It is reasonable to say that we could not only understand the Psalms better, but enjoy them and profit by them more, if we knew their authors and the circumstances of their composition. This is true on the one side, just as it is true that special interest is given to the reading of the Scriptures by a visit to Jerusalem or the Lake of Galilee, and that sacred impressions derived from reading the Book of Genesis or the fourth chapter of John are greatly deepened by the sight of Jacob's Well or the Cave of Machpelah. Every touch of the concrete which enables us to give reality to the abstract, all local and historical colour which visualizes our imaginations for us, is valuable. But for the purposes of spiritual instruction localization has its dangers. The Lord Jesus Christ said, 'It is expedient for you that I go away,' though his disciples found it hard to believe this, and were slow to understand the gain which was theirs through the coming of that other Comforter. So the spiritual value of the Psalms is unquestionably increased by the absence of those definite historical allusions which would enable us at once to determine their date and authorship, while at the same time the references are close enough for us to illustrate the meaning from various events of Israelitish history to which, with a little modification, they would not inaptly apply. The human touches in the Psalms are frequent enough and personal enough to bring home to readers in all generations the fact that these spiritual songs were written by men compassed with the infirmities, exposed to the dangers and troubled by the woes and doubts and fears of our common humanity, while the particularization of circumstances is not minute enough to prevent saints of all countries and periods from making the language their own. The study of Wordsworth's poems is made much more interesting by the notes which he has left concerning the time and place of their composition, but their higher value is apt to be

diminished by a diversion of the reader's attention. And if the student of the Psalms to-day cannot attach each several composition to a definite time and place, he may the more readily enter into the true spirit of words which were intended not for one age, but for all time.

V. Poetical Structure.

The amount of Hebrew poetical literature that has come down to us is very considerable, if we include in it only the Books of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Lamentations, and scattered poems which occur in the historical and prophetical Books. But it is clear that the extant poetry forms only part of a greater whole. Two very early collections of poems are mentioned, which have been lost. One of these is called the 'Book of the Wars of Jehovah' in Num. xxi. 14, and an extract from it referring to Moab is given. It was evidently a collection of ancient war-songs, and the way in which it is quoted testifies to the early existence, not only of poems, but of collections of poems. In Joshua x. 13 an extract is given from the 'Book of Jashar' (the Upright), in which collection David's elegy over Saul and Jonathan was included, 2 Sam. i. 18. There can be little doubt that this Book contained verses in praise of heroes and worthies of Israel, whose memory for various reasons it was thought desirable to preserve. We are told also in 1 Kings iv. 32 that Solomon 'spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five,' but these are not to be hastily identified with the 'proverbs' that have come down to us under his name. The Book of Amos gives further testimony on this subject. In vi. 5 we read of drinking-songs which were sung by the rich and luxurious of the prophet's time, while in v. 23 there is mention of 'the noise of thy songs and the melody of thy viols' in connexion with the service of the sanctuary, service which was intended to be, but was not, acceptable to Jehovah. It does not follow, of course, that such 'songs' consisted

of careful devotional compositions, but at least the germs of subsequent 'Psalms' must be referred to, and most of these have probably perished.

The specimens which have come down to us, however, amply suffice to show the variety of the occasions on which songs were sung and the purposes for which poetry was employed. The literature of 'folk-songs' in all nations is fairly large. It is easy to understand that in primitive times that which was intended to be remembered would be embodied in (perhaps rude) poetical form. But for weddings and funerals, for war and peace, for harvest and vintage, for national and for religious purposes alike, verse rather than prose was used in early times amongst the Hebrews as amongst other peoples. One very early fragment has reached us in 'The Song of the Well,' which is recorded in Num. xxi. 17. It celebrates the joy characteristic of Eastern countries when a spring is discovered and a well is dug. Another example is the sword-song of Lamech in Gen. iv. 23. Harvest-songs are perhaps referred to in Isa. ix. 3, as vintage-songs certainly are in lxv. 8. The fragment recorded in Num. xxi. 27–30 is attributed to them 'that speak in proverbs,' but the phrase which would convey to our ears the idea intended would be they 'that sing in ballads,' were not the associations of the word somewhat too loose and trivial. Many critics consider that specimens of the early wedding-songs have come down to us in Canticles, or even that the whole Book consists of a collection of songs similar to the *wasf* of modern bridal ceremonies amongst the Arabs. It is much more probable that a writer familiar with such songs has adapted this style of composition for another and a higher purpose. The meaning of Ps. xlv will be dealt with in its place. But specimens of the dirge or elegy have been preserved. Jeremiah (ix. 17) refers to the songs of the mourning women, who were accustomed to 'take up a wailing' for the dead, sometimes doubtless in inarticulate fashion, but sometimes repeating panegyrics

such as are contained in the lament for Abner in 2 Sam. iii. 33, and David's lament for Saul so often referred to. Again, the 'riddles' which displayed Samson's wit (see Judges xiv. 14) or Solomon's or Agur's wisdom (see Prov. i. 6 and xxx. 15, 18) must be taken into account when the different forms of Hebrew poetical literature are enumerated.

Much more important are the national songs or poems, running to considerable length, of which examples are to be found in the Song at the Passage of the Red Sea, Exod. xv; the Song of Deborah, Judges v; the Blessing of Jacob, Gen. xlix; the Song of Moses and Blessing of Moses, Deut. xxxii and xxxiii. In all probability the form in which some of these poems have come down to us represents a later development of an earlier and simpler 'song.' It does not come within the scope of this introduction to deal with the structure of Hebrew poetry outside the Psalms, but it is clear that our immediate subject demands a glance at the wider field. For the Psalms are the fine, consummate flower of a plant, the whole growth of which should be fairly understood if the bloom itself is to be rightly appreciated.

Hebrew poetry is for the most part either lyric or gnomic. There is no Hebrew epic, nor did dramatic poetry, strictly speaking, exist amongst the Jews, though dramatic elements in certain poems are not wanting, e.g. in Job and Canticles. The poetry of the Psalms is, of course, lyric in character, though in some few instances an approach is made to the gnomic and didactic strains of (say) the opening chapters of the Book of Proverbs.

In form Hebrew poetry is of the simplest. Hence the difficulty in some cases of drawing a strict line between poetry and prose. The Oriental uses in ordinary language vivid and varied metaphors, such as we reserve for verse; the Eastern orator falls almost unconsciously into rhythm and melody; and the Hebrew prophet, when under the influence of the Divine spirit, is raised even above this

level by the loftiness of his subject-matter and the afflatus which fills his soul. None the less, a line may be drawn which separates his most glowing and imaginative outpourings from poetry. The rapt utterances of an Isaiah are poetic in the highest degree, 'of imagination all compact,' but they are not poetry, and the Revisers in their introduction very properly distinguish between poetry and 'impassioned prose.' A different system of accents in the Hebrew marks the distinction as it was understood by the Massoretic scribes. For example, Hebrew poetry has its own vocabulary: many words found freely in the Psalms are never employed by prose writers. A poetic diction, too, is discernible in the retention of certain archaic forms of words and terminations in the declension of nouns and conjugations of verbs, together with a few grammatical peculiarities, not important enough to constitute anything like a special dialect, but discernible by the scholar, even in spite of the work of the Massorites, which tended to remove archaisms and make spelling and pointing uniform.

There is no rhyme, properly speaking, in Hebrew poetry, such as figures so largely in Arabic. Yet occasionally, as in Ps. cv, the ringing of changes upon certain suffixes gives the effect of an irregular rhyme. Perhaps this should be described rather as assonance, a device of which use is freely made both in poetry and rhetorical prose. A characteristic example is found in Isa. v. 7: 'He looked for judgement (*mishpāt*), but behold oppression (*mishpāch*); for righteousness (*tsedākāh*), but behold a cry (*tse'akah*).' This may be considered an example of Paronomasia, or play upon words, such as for the most part cannot be rendered into another language, but all Hebrew students know that this artifice is used in the Old Testament—as it is indeed in Shakespeare—in the loftiest and most impressive passages, without any thought of the lighter associations which in our minds belong to such verbal ingenuities.

But simple as is the form of Hebrew poetry, it is real and very effective. Its basis is the **line**, and from this we may proceed to the construction of the **verse**, thence to the **metre**, thence to the **strophe** or **stanza**: each being characterized by its own law of liberty, which is none the less a law because a considerable measure of freedom is permitted in its application. For example, there is no rule for the length of a line, yet it is certain that a limit is observed, marked by (1) sense, (2) grammatical construction, (3) ease of pronunciation in a single breath. It consists usually of from three to six words, representing at least double as many in English. In some Hebrew MSS. this distinction into lines is preserved, notably in the recently discovered fragments of the Hebrew original of Ecclesiasticus. In Goethe, Longfellow, and Whitman may be found examples of poems in which this division into lines without rhyme, strict metre, or uniform length is the chief characteristic of the versification. Whether any more exact rule for the number of feet or syllables to be found in each line is at all discoverable will be discussed directly. But at the outset it must be said that since it has been and still is a moot question whether there be such a law at all, it is quite clear that the scale by which lines were measured must form a very uncertain element in the construction of Hebrew verse.

It has been said that the line is the basis of each poem; it might perhaps be contended that the unit is to be found, not in the single line, but in the **distich** or **couplet**, consisting of two lines marked by parallelism of members. Bishop Lowth, in 1753, was the first among moderns to point out the importance of this principle as the essential feature of Hebrew poetry. He defines this parallelism as 'that relation and proportion of one verse to another which arises from the correspondence of terms and from the form of construction; from whence results a rhythmus of propositions and a harmony of sentences'; and in another place he describes it as such that in two or more

members words correspond to words and matter to matter with a studied and measured equality. Where there are two such parallel members the verse exists in its simplest form :—

A wise son maketh a glad father :
But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee :
Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

It is obvious that so long as this parallelism is observed the relation between the two members may vary indefinitely. Lowth classified these relations by defining the parallelism as either (1) *synonymous*, in which the sense of each line is the same, emphasis being given by the double expression ; or (2) *antithetic*, where the two members of the pair enforce a contrast, an artistic statement of one idea viewed from opposite sides ; or (3) *constructive* or *synthetic*, which consists only in a similar construction, words not precisely answering to words, nor sentence to sentence as equivalent or opposite, but a correspondence being maintained in respect of the whole, by the addition of accessory ideas and modifications. It has been felt, however, that this classification is not altogether happy. The third class is not properly distinguished from the former two, so that the same example has been given by different writers under different heads. Then each of the former two classes bears almost indefinite subdivision, and the distinction between 'synonymous' and 'antithetic' is not deep and fundamental enough to form a basis. No classification which proceeds on these lines, even if Lowth's list were enlarged, would give an adequate idea of the almost endless diversity of relation between the members in form, structure, and significance. For example, no account is taken of the couplet which forms an expanded metaphor or emblem :—

As cold waters to a thirsty soul,
So is good news from a far country.

The legs of the lame hang loose,
So is a parable in the mouth of fools.

The couplet is the most frequent form of parallelism, but a **triplet** or tristich is occasionally found. An example may be taken from the New Testament, in Christ's words :—

Ask, and it shall be given you;
Seek, and ye shall find;
Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

The **tetrastich**, consisting of four lines, may exhibit a correlation of two couplets, or three parallel lines may be followed by an independent one, or a steady progression may be discernible throughout the four:—

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat;
And if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:
For thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head,
And Jehovah shall reward thee.

The connexion between the two pairs of lines is too close to resolve the tetrastich into independent couplets. An arrangement of five lines, of six, seven, eight, and even up to ten lines, has been traced by some writers, but into these further developments of the principle we need not enter. In the Psalms the principles by which the simpler elements are built up into a poem will become clear as we proceed.

Is **metre** discernible in Hebrew poetry? This has long been denied, as it has on the other hand been strenuously asserted by individual scholars, whilst of late the opinion has been steadily growing that the latter are right. Lowth, in a well-known passage of his preliminary dissertation to Isaiah, said that the harmony of the verses proceeds 'from some sort of rhythm, probably from some sort of metre, the laws of which are now altogether unknown and wholly undiscoverable.' Very various principles have been tried to account for the metrical

phenomena, as Kepler tried all kinds of laws to account for the relation between the periodic times of the planets and their distance from the sun, but as yet without Kepler's success. Part of the difficulty may arise from modifications of the original which Massoretic pointing has introduced, or from corruptions in the text; and all kinds of liberties are taken with the received text by theorists anxious to establish a metrical hypothesis. Two schools are discernible among modern writers on this subject, according to whether accent alone is to be recognized, or whether all syllables are to be counted as having a place in the metrical scheme. Perhaps of these theories the former is the more probable, inasmuch as the early writing was without vowels and the lines are separated by the sense, and therefore an attempt to carry out a uniform principle of measurement by syllables would be exceedingly difficult. On the other hand, the predominance in every line of one tone-accent—with from time to time a secondary accent not interfering with the main stress—would be in accordance with what we know of primitive versification in other nations. Further discussion of the matter here would be out of place, inasmuch as no agreement among scholars has yet been reached. Some progress has, however, been made of late years, and there is no reason to despair of the attainment of some measure of success. The chief danger lies in an attempt to systematize with undue and pedantic precision. An appreciation of the poetry of the Psalms can hardly be said to be increased by a study of some of the metrical theories of recent years, which are little better than attempts to put Pegasus in harness, or to measure by a foot-rule the waves of the sea.

The line, with its predominating tone or accent; the verse, consisting as a rule of two lines, often of more; metre, occasionally discernible, but always irregular and for the most part irreducible to rule—so far the way is clear. The next question is, whether there be in Hebrew

poetry, and especially in the Psalms, anything corresponding to the **strophe** in the Greek chorus, or the **stanza** in modern verse. In favour of this is to be said first, that in a fairly long poem such a break would be as natural, if not as necessary, as the end of a paragraph in a prose composition. As the length of a line is approximately determined by the number of words that can be pronounced in a breath, or that express a simple proposition, so the length of a stanza would be determined by the sufficient working-out of a given thought or theme. This is confirmed by the occurrence in certain Psalms of a refrain, marking the close of such a cluster of verses. Well-known examples are, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' in Pss. xlii and xliii; 'The Lord of hosts is with us' in Ps. xlvi; 'Turn us again, O Lord of hosts' in Ps. lxxx; and 'Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness' in Ps. cvii. It may be added—though the proof here is not one that can be far relied on—that the word 'Selah' is found for the most part at the end of what would correspond to a paragraph in prose and may be called a stanza in poetry. If no more be meant by the stanza or strophe than the natural subdivision of longer Psalms into portions of irregular length, sometimes clearly marked by a refrain, or by letters of the alphabet, or by 'Selah,' sometimes only generally discernible by the sense, but always giving a certain pause to the mind in reading and rest to the voice in reciting, there can be little question that such an arrangement is to be found in the Psalms, and should be as far as possible preserved. But as the attempt to press the real but irregular metre of the lines into definitely measured and regularly determined syllables has thus far failed, and probably would only spoil the Psalms if it succeeded, so the attempt to map out a Psalm into portions with lines of the same length corresponding to each other at intervals, and to introduce the technical Greek strophe in all its precision into Hebrew poetry, has failed and is, as we think, happily

destined to fail, as often as it is renewed. In dealing with individual Psalms in these volumes, an attempt will be made to guide the reader in each case to such division of the verses into stanzas as may be easily and naturally made according to the sense, or which is distinctly indicated as intended by the Psalmist; it being always understood, however, that the use of the word 'stanza' does not imply any regular system of versification such as in modern poetry it would properly denote.

VI. Versions and Use in the Church.

It remains to say something concerning the use made of the Psalms by translation into other languages, and especially their employment in the Christian Church.

The received text of the Hebrew, known as Massoretic—i. e. traditionally handed down and shaped by the professional scribes who prepared it in its present form—has been very carefully preserved by the Jews for more than a thousand years. It is impossible, however, to pursue research into the earliest history of the text, the very uniformity which the Jews have anxiously preserved for generations standing unfortunately in the way. The chief help to be obtained is from the early versions, which in some places preserve various readings which materially assist in the interpretation of obscure passages. In places the received text is almost certainly corrupt, but great care is necessary in emendation, since nothing is easier than to get rid of a difficulty by a modern conjecture, which has no more support than the opinion of scholars of the twentieth century that the Psalmist *may* have written words which their ingenuity has devised for him. The Greek translation known as the Septuagint (LXX) was made in the course of the third and second centuries B. C. It cannot be pronounced a good translation: it is often obviously faulty, often it appears to evade rather than to solve a difficulty, and in some places the rendering

is quite unaccountable. But this last phenomenon may point to a difference of text, and in a number of instances it is quite clear that the LXX points to another, often to an easier and sometimes presumably to a better, text than the received Hebrew. The Targum—a later Aramaic paraphrase—at least shows what was the traditional Jewish opinion of the meaning of a Psalm some centuries after it was written. The Syriac Version, which often agrees with the Hebrew against the Greek, not seldom agrees with the Greek against the Hebrew, thus helping to guide us to the true text. The same may be said of Jerome's version of the Psalms into Latin, which was made directly from the Hebrew of his time, whilst the Vulgate was a rendering from the Greek. When the various early versions agree in a reading differing from the received text, and that in itself presents some grammatical irregularity or awkwardness of expression, the probabilities are that they represent an earlier and better text. The Revisers give the English reader some guidance in this matter by occasionally printing in their margin readings from the most important versions.

Later translations—who can count them? Who can enumerate even the languages into which these 'Praises' of the Most High God have been rendered? After the Gospels, the Book of Psalms has usually been one of the first to be rendered into the language of each country into which Christianity has penetrated, and at the present time the Psalter may be read in nearly two hundred languages and dialects. The standard translations now in use in English are that of the Prayer Book Version, the Authorized Version (1611), and the Revised Version (1884), the last of which is used in this volume. The so-called 'Prayer Book Version' was retained at the last revision of the Book of Common Prayer in 1662, because it was more familiar to the people than the recently made translation of 1611, and because it was 'smoother and more easy to sing.' It was, as is well known, made by Miles Coverdale, incor-

porated into 'Matthew's Bible' in 1537 and the Great Bible (1540), and it has been retained in the Anglican Prayer Book ever since. It has endeared itself to generations, and helped to enrich the English language; and its literary and devotional value is not to be estimated by the degree of accuracy it exhibits in the rendering of the Hebrew.

For—not to speak of Luther in Germany, and Marot and Beza in France—it would require a small volume to give an account of the metrical versions of the Psalms that have appeared in the English language alone during the last three or four centuries. Soon after 1540 Thomas Sternhold, 'Grome of his Maiestie's robes,' was overheard by the young king Edward VI 'singing to his organ' such words as had never been heard in English before:—

O God, my Strength and Fortitude,
Of force I must love Thee;
Thou art my Castle and Defence
In my necessitie.

Before his death, in 1549, thirty-seven of his Psalms had been published with a dedication to the king; John Hopkins, a Suffolk clergyman, helped to make up a hundred Psalms; and by 1556 the whole hundred and fifty had been rendered into English metre—a version of which forty-seven editions were printed before 1600, 308 in the seventeenth century, and now specimens of more than 600 editions are preserved in the British Museum Library! Tate and Brady, the Scotch Version, the translations of separate Psalms by Milton, Watts, Wesley, Addison, and Keble, are all more or less familiar in this country, and these are named only to illustrate the hold which the Psalter in whole or in part has obtained in one Christian nation.

For the Christian Church throughout the centuries has testified to the inestimable value of the Psalms for public worship and private devotion. Christ and his disciples, as devout Jews, sang Psalms at that solemn Passover

which was to be known through history as 'the Last Supper.' The Apostles James the Just and Paul the enthusiastic alike enjoin their early Christian followers to 'sing Psalms' and to 'teach and admonish one another in spiritual songs.' Tertullian describes the singing of Psalms at love-feasts, Ambrose organized and improved the use of psalmody in church worship, Athanasius enlarges on its value and importance, Chrysostom eloquently describes how Christians turned earthly night into heavenly day by the chanting of Psalms: 'When others are asleep, David alone is active!' For many centuries the Psalter was repeated at least once through in every week by ecclesiastical rule, and several canons mention a refusal to ordain such clerics as could not repeat the Psalms by heart. In later days, if the old mechanical repetition is not preserved, the Psalms have been probably not less loved, as they have assuredly been more carefully studied, more copiously annotated, and more accurately understood. As a stimulus to devotion for the languid, as a vehicle of praise and prayer for the godly, as music to the sad heart and wings for the joyous spirit, the Psalms have for thousands of years proved their inestimable worth and their inexhaustible resources. Appreciation of them has grown with the centuries, and every generation of devout souls finds them new. It is hoped that the pages which follow may do something to elucidate their meaning, especially for those who have little opportunity for study.

VII. Literature.

The following selection includes only a few easily accessible English books, such as are likely to be most useful to those who desire to study the Psalter more closely.

A. F. Kirkpatrick: *The Psalms.* (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.) Edition in one vol. The best in brief compass for all readers.

PEROWNE: *The Book of Psalms.* Larger edition in two vols., for Hebrew students; abridged in one vol.

MACLAREN: *Psalms.* (Expositor's Bible.) Three vols.

DRIVER: *Introduction to Literature of Old Testament,* pp. 359–391. Sixth edition. The best account of modern critical views.

CHEYNE: *The Origin of the Psalter.* (Bampton Lectures for 1889.) ROBERTSON: *Poetry and Religion of the Psalms.* (Croall Lectures for 1893.) These two books are representative, respectively, of advanced and conservative views on the subject.

Articles in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (W. R. SMITH), HASTINGS' *Dictionary of the Bible* (W. T. DAVISON), *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (W. R. SMITH and T. K. CHEYNE).

Excellent editions of the Psalter are

DRIVER: *The Parallel Psalter,* containing P.B.V. and one by the editor.

Cambridge Parallel Psalter, containing A.V., R.V., and P.B.V.

*** Other subjects of importance which belong to 'Introduction,' including 'The Spirit of Hebrew poetry,' 'The "I" of the Psalmist,' 'The Religious and Ethical Ideas of the Psalms,' 'The Messianic Hope,' and 'The Doctrine of a Future Life in the Psalter,' will be dealt with in the Introductory Chapter to vol. ii. of this work.

Delitzsch: The Book of Psalms. Larger edition in two vols., for Hebrew students; abridged in one vol.

Maclaren: Psalms. (Expositor's Bible.) Three vols.

Driver: Introduction to Literature of Old Testament, pp. 349 sqq. Sixth edition. The best account of modern critical views.

Cheyne: The Origin of the Psalter. (Bampton Lectures for 1889.) Robertson: Poetry and Religion of the Psalms. (Croall Lectures for 1898.) These two books are representative, respectively, of advanced and conservative views on the subject.

Articles in Encyclopædia Britannica (W. R. Smith), Hastings's Dictionary of the Bible (W. T. Davison), Encyclopædia Biblica (W. R. Smith and T. K. Cheyne).

Excellent editions of the Psalter are

Driver: The Parallel Psalter, containing P.B.V. and one by the editor.

Cambridge Parallel Psalter, containing A.V., R.V., and P.B.V.

Other subjects of importance which belong to 'Introduction,' including 'The Spirit of Hebrew poetry,' 'The "I" of the Psalmist,' 'The Religious and Ethical Ideas of the Psalms,' 'The Messianic Hope,' and 'The Doctrine of a Future Life in the Psalter,' will be dealt with in the Introductory Chapter to vol. II. of this work.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

I—LXXII

REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

I—LXXII

REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

I—LXXII

BOOK I.

Psalm I. The Two Ways.

The first psalm forms an appropriate portal to the sanctuary of the Psalter. In all probability it was set in its present place by the editor of the first collection of 'Davidic' Psalms (see Introd. p. 7); less probably at the final redaction of the whole book. It stands without name of author, without title, without historical date-mark of any kind, and its very timelessness enhances the effect of the broad and strong contrast it draws between good and evil, light and darkness, life and death, the blessing and the curse which surely attach to the righteous and the wicked.

This introductory character was pointed out by Basil in the fourth century, but long before his time it had been obvious in the arrangement of the Psalter. In some MSS. the Psalm does not receive a number, but is treated as a prologue, and in others it is joined with the second Psalm. In the Talmud our first and second Psalms are said to form one *Parasha*; a mediaeval commentator draws attention to the fact that the first Psalm begins and ends with a beatitude (i. 1 and ii. 12); while in Acts xiii. 33, where Ps. ii. 7 is quoted, Codex Bezae and other authorities read 'in the first Psalm.' Such a blending can only have arisen from close juxtaposition and the absence of titles; there is no real connexion between the Psalms, which are widely separated in subject and probably in date.

The materials for fixing a date are few and doubtful. The only verbal parallels which help us are Joshua i. 8, where Joshua is bidden to 'meditate in the book of the law day and night,' and Jer. xvii. 5–8. In the former case the coincidence may have been accidental, though it seems to point to a similar date for the two passages. The parallel in the latter case is too close to have been accidental, one of the two writers must have been familiar with the words of the other. In such cases it is a delicate matter to assign priority, but the fact that Jeremiah's habit is to quote freely

1 BLESSED is the man that walketh not in the counsel of
the wicked,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD;
And in his law doth he meditate day and night.

---

from earlier literature, that the figure of the tree 'planted by the waters' is more fully developed in the prophecy, and that the companion picture of the man 'whose heart departeth from the Lord' is elaborated in detail, together with other less obvious signs, seems to point to an earlier date for the Psalm. The general parallel with Prov. x–xxiv may indicate the later pre-Exilic period as the most probable date, say the seventh century B. C.

The Psalm has a character of its own. Its gnomic and didactic strain is akin to some paragraphs in Proverbs. The simplicity of its declarations concerning the happiness of the righteous is not alloyed by any doubt or afterthought, but it would be a mistake to confine the promises of the Psalm to material prosperity.

1. 'Happy' (R. V. marg.). The Psalmist is not describing an inward state of joy or beatitude, but wishes rather to emphasize the visible reward which God gives to those who love and obey His commandments.

In the last clause read, 'sitteth in the company of scorners.' The three parallel clauses of the verse may or may not be intended to form a climax. They are usually so understood—walking, standing, sitting; counsel, way, company; wicked, sinners, scorners—the words seem to imply a progressively closer association with evil of a more pronounced kind. But the laws of parallelism do not require this. In each case the perfect tense of the verb used indicates a habit, but in English this is better described by the present 'walketh' than by the perfect 'hath walked.' What is meant is—the righteous man is one who habitually avoids (1) sharing in the thoughts and ideas of evil men, and still more (2) associating himself with the habits of those known to be offenders. Still less would he dream of (3) deliberately assembling with men who confederated to sneer at and attack religion.

2. These negative characteristics are explained by the fact that his whole heart is elsewhere. Delight in God, His will, and His word, is a safeguard which makes duty easy. The word translated **meditate** suggests in the Hebrew the low murmuring with which a man cons over to himself lines of verse which charm his imagination and his ear, or repeats in soliloquy a name that he loves.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of 3
water,
That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also doth not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
The wicked are not so; 4
But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.
Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgement, 5
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: 6
But the way of the wicked shall perish.

The **law** here is not to be understood of a definite collection of books, but the revelation of the Divine will, especially in the form of righteous precept.

3. Better, 'so shall he be like'; the freshness and fertility of spirit here described are a direct consequence of joy in the will of God. The **streams** spoken of may be either natural or artificial. Cf. Eccles. ii. 6, 'I made me pools of water, to water therefrom the forest where trees were reared.' Greenness of foliage and regularity and abundance of fruit are in Eastern countries specially dependent on irrigation; the roots must have access to running water. Read (marg.) 'in whatsoever he doeth he shall prosper,' or 'all that he doeth he maketh to prosper.' Both on grammatical grounds and for purposes of interpretation the person should be the subject of the verb.

4. The contrasting figure which describes the wicked also appeals more forcibly to an inhabitant of Palestine, who is familiar with the open threshing-floor on the hill-side, where winnowing is greatly helped by the wind which blows steadily in from the sea during the later hours of the day. As the corn is thrown up by the fan against the breeze, the light chaff is carried away, whilst the heavy grain descends to earth. The figure of 'stubble before the wind' is employed in Job xxi. 18, and often in the O. T. Compare John the Baptist's use of it in Matt. iii. 12.

5, 6. Metaphor is now dropped, and a sharp distinction is drawn between those whose **way,** or course in life, is 'known' by God, i. e. regarded with loving care and interest; and those whose conduct will not bear investigation in present or future judgement, who must be separated from the gathering of the righteous. Their 'way,' or life-work, must come to nothing, or come only to ruin, because it is essentially godless. In Job vi. 18 there is

2 Why do the nations rage,
And the peoples imagine a vain thing?

---

a striking description of a caravan in the desert going up into the waste and perishing, because the streams on which they had depended for water had been dried up by the heat. Their track loses itself in sand, their bones bleach in the desert. Such ruin, says the Psalmist, must sooner or later overtake all who forsake God.

PSALM II. THE KINGDOM OF THE LORD'S ANOINTED.

The contrast between the first and second Psalms is marked. The former is as abstract and general in its contents as the latter is concrete and historical. The position is unmistakable. A king, who as 'God's anointed' represents the name and cause of Jehovah in the earth, is threatened by rebel princes who attempt to throw off his yoke. In sublime language, and with great dramatic power, they are rebuked for their folly and warned to submit in time to one against whom it is futile to revolt, inasmuch as the covenant of the Most High has secured his dominion and will punish all his foes.

But whilst the position is clear, the actual historical occasion cannot be defined. David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Alexander Jannaeus have in turn been suggested as the possible 'anointed king' of the text. But no revolt of subject-nations against David is recorded, and historically Solomon's is the most likely name. Some have regarded him as the author of the Psalm; others, with greater probability, consider that a poet in or after Solomon's time dramatically represented the situation. Other commentators, however, being unable to find an appropriate background in recorded history, view the Psalm as directly Messianic, and in any case it will be understood that the typical meaning of the words prevails over the historical, i. e. that though an historical occasion may have suggested the Psalm, its language and scope transcend the actual. A Messianic application of verses 1 and 2 is made by Peter in Acts iv. 25–27, who probably uses the word 'David' in much the same sense as our 'Psalmist.' The emphasis laid on the sonship of the king recalls the promises of 2 Sam. vii, but the loftiness of the language in parts suits the position of the ideal King, the Messiah, rather than any actual occupant of the throne. Compare the use made of verse 7 by Paul at Antioch, Acts xiii. 33, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews i. 5 and v. 5.

The Psalm divides naturally into four strophes, each consisting of three verses: 1–3, the projected rebellion; 4–6, Jehovah's son; 7–9, the authority of God's vicegerent; 10–12, warning to the

The kings of the earth set themselves, 2
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*,
Let us break their bands asunder, 3
And cast away their cords from us.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: 4
The Lord shall have them in derision.
Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, 5
And vex them in his sore displeasure:
Yet I have set my king 6
Upon my holy hill of Zion.

---

rebels to submit speedily. It has been said by a distinguished critic to exhibit 'the utmost art of Hebrew poetry' (Cheyne).

1. Read, 'Why do the nations tumultuously throng together?' The English word 'tumult'—compare the use of the same root in Ps. lxiv. 2, 'The tumultuous assemblage of evil-doers'—best suggests the meaning.

In the whole description the terseness of style gives a sense of vividness, whilst a change in the Hebrew tenses, impossible to render in English, indicates dramatic development, and the very sound of the rushing words is suggestive. The sudden outburst at the opening—**Why?** impresses upon the reader the utter 'vanity' of the attempted revolt far better than any laboured description.

2, 3. Read, 'The kings of the earth take their stand'; the verb in the latter clause has been rendered by Driver, 'sit in conclave' together. Secretly plotting, or openly rebelling, they oppose the true king. Jehovah's rule and that of His representative are one; a vain thing it must be to attempt to overthrow it; 'as hopeless as if the stars were to combine to abolish gravitation' (Maclaren).

4. From earth we turn to heaven. Read, 'He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh; the Lord mocketh at them.' A bold picture is presented by the Psalmist of *the* King surveying all in calm and indignant scorn, and afterwards we hear Him speak. The tenses in this verse should be rendered as presents.

5. Then—in due time, in His own time, when folly is ripe and the bubble ready to burst—'He will speak in wrath, and in his hot displeasure will confound them'; will smite them, that is, with bewildering panic.

6. An ellipsis occurs here of great dramatic force, 'But *I* have set,' with a double emphasis upon the 'I.' The drift of course is, How can you, how dare you rebel, when *I* have appointed

7 I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said unto me, Thou art my son;
This day have I begotten thee.
8 Ask of me, and I will give *thee* the nations for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.
9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
10 Now therefore be wise, O ye kings:
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

---

a monarch whose right it is to rule? Zion is used poetically for Jerusalem, and 'holy hill' is thought by many to indicate a comparatively late date in the history of the city.

7. A sudden change of speaker occurs, such as sounds abrupt to our ears, but is not uncommon in the writings both of psalmists and prophets. After Jehovah, His representative explains his position. We might insert an explanatory phrase, 'The king speaks,' before the words 'I will relate the decree,' &c. God's promise to him is viewed as a kind of edict, a Divine rescript having the force of law.

The anointing of Solomon is described as a solemn function with spiritual significance, 1 Kings i. 34. On that sacred day the promise of God to be a father to the king, and the duty of the king to be a true son of God, was especially dwelt upon; it was the birthday of the son. So in the N. T. the words are applied to Jesus Christ, the day in question being that of the Resurrection, Rom. i. 4; or in his superiority to angels, Heb. i. 5; or as appointed priest by God Himself, Heb. v. 5. The recognition of Christ's sonship in the Resurrection seems especially to have impressed Paul (Acts xiii. 33), and the parallel with the O. T. anointing commends itself.

8. The phrases of this verse must be understood hyperbolically if applied to a king of Israel: compare the promise to Abraham in Gen. xvii. 8. Canaan is to be 'an everlasting possession,' yet He gave him none inheritance in it. The words are true typically, and will receive a complete fulfilment before the end.

9. Read, 'a mace of iron,' as a warlike implement, or perhaps 'an iron sceptre,' as a symbol. For the 'shattering' of a potter's vessel see Jer. xix. 11; it 'cannot be made whole again.'

10. Another change of speaker: the Psalmist in his own person addresses rulers generally. Read, 'be admonished, ye judges of the earth.'

Serve the LORD with fear, 11
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way, 12
For his wrath will soon be kindled.
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son. 3

LORD, how are mine adversaries increased! 1
Many are they that rise up against me.

---

11. Notice again the close identification of Jehovah with His vicegerent. To engage in warfare against this anointed king is to resist God Himself.

12. The margin of R. V. shows the difficulty of translation here. It is, however, safe to say that **Kiss the son** represents an almost impossible reading, the word for 'son' being not Hebrew but Aramaic. The versions point in another direction, and in all probability give us correctly the general meaning of the verse, even if we cannot be sure as to the correct reading in the Hebrew.

Render 'Do homage purely,' or 'Receive instruction, lest he be angry,' i. e. Jehovah, 'for his anger quickly burneth. Blessed are all they that take refuge in him.' If the phrase 'Kiss the son' be retained, 'kiss' must of course be understood as a mark of homage, see 1 Sam. x. 1.

The anger, however, is that of God Himself; spoken of elsewhere as 'the fire that burneth the forest, and as the flame that setteth the mountains on fire' (Ps. lxxxiii. 14, and compare Heb. x. 29). The adverb means may 'easily' be kindled, not in the sense of 'lightly,' as a passionate man blazes out on slight occasion; but because God is a jealous God and will not long brook wilful human opposition. On the other hand He is a genial friend, giving true happiness to those who take refuge under His strong protecting care.

Thus does a second beatitude bring to a gracious close a Psalm which opened with the mutterings of threatened war, and teaches to high and low upon the earth the only true secret of peace.

PSALM III. THE SAINT'S MORNING HYMN: COURAGE IN GOD.

The first Psalm with a title. It may be noted that the word *Mizmor*, translated 'Psalm,' occurs only in the titles, as if it related to the music rather than the subject-matter.

This Psalm is attributed to David during his flight from Absalom.

2 Many there be which say of my soul,
There is no help for him in God. [Selah

The contents of the Psalm do not point specially to such an occasion, neither does it contain anything which would interfere with this account of authorship, except that the phrase 'his holy hill' as a description of Zion might be thought to be out of place so early. The writer is in great straits, his cause seems almost desperate, but his confidence in God is unshaken, and in the morning hour he gives thanks and prays. Many writers who do not freely accept Davidic Psalms are inclined to make an exception in the case of this and the next.

The full narrative of David's flight after Absalom's rebellion, probably referred to in the title, should be read, see 2 Sam. xv–xviii. The historian is unusually minute and graphic, and the song and the history may be made to illustrate one another. Compare e. g. the danger by night, 2 Sam. xvii. 1; the myriads of people, 2 Sam. xv. 13. It is impossible, though some have made the attempt, to specify precisely the morning in question, e. g. the morning after the night mentioned in 2 Sam. xvii. 16. But the Psalm apparently belongs to the earlier part of the rebellion, when its rapid success was striking fear into the hearts of David's friends.

A subdivision of the Psalm may naturally be made in accordance with the position of the 'Selah' thrice repeated. There will then be four stanzas: verses 1 and 2 express the need; verses 3 and 4 help in God; verses 5 and 6 describe David's confidence; verses 7 and 8 his prayer for fuller deliverance.

1. Render, 'Jehovah, how many are my foes become! many are rising up against me.' Compare 2 Sam. xv. 12, where it is said, 'the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.'

2. Render, 'Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God.' The same word 'help' or 'salvation' should be employed both here and in verse 8, or the point of the connexion is lost. 'Salvation' implies safety or deliverance in the fullest sense; it must not be limited to bodily security, though neither must a purely or predominantly spiritual meaning be given to the word.

my soul is a stronger way of saying 'myself'; the shade of meaning depends upon the context. If we translate 'of my soul,' it is almost equivalent to 'life'; if with R. V. marg. 'to my soul,' the idea is 'to me, with a desire to wound my heart.' For the taunting language of this verse compare Shimei's curse in 2 Sam. xvi. 8 and David's silent submission, verse 10.

But thou, O LORD, art a shield about me;
My glory, and the lifter up of mine head.
I cry unto the LORD with my voice,
And he answereth me out of his holy hill. [Selah
I laid me down and slept;
I awaked; for the LORD sustaineth me.
I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people,
That have set themselves against me round about.
Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God:
For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone;
Thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked.

For **Selah,** as indicating a musical interlude, see Introduction, p. 14.

3. 'And yet *thou*,' strongly emphatic, as addressed to One who knows and is well known.

art a shield about me: as with Abraham, Gen. xv. 1, and compare Ps. xviii. 2. His kingly glory gone, covered with shame and reproach which he patiently bears and knows that to some extent he has deserved, David still possesses an inner sense of Divine favour. He knows that the God in whom he trusts can lift him out of the lowest depths of trouble and disgrace, see iv. 3. If God be his glory, his head will be lifted up ere long.

4. The tenses used here are imperfects, and the meaning is, 'As often as I cry, he answereth.' The 'holy hill' is not the temple-hill as such, but Zion, represented as the dwelling-place of God, see ii. 6.

5. The **I** is emphatic; even under these circumstances, 'I lay down and slept,' the tenses referring to historic fact. Or, 'I for my part was calm enough to lie down and sleep.' In either case a proof is afforded that God is the Psalmist's shield, protecting him in the darkness and unconsciousness of the night.

6. The 'myriads' of this verse indicates what the historian declares, that at the outset of the rebellion all Israel was against David. The language may be hyperbolical, but it could not appropriately be used, say, of a persecuted saint in post-Exilic times.

7. The call upon God to 'arise' is, of course, anthropomorphic. It was handed on as a watchword from wilderness days, when Israel started on a journey, led by the ark, 'Rise up, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered,' and is re-echoed in Ps. lxviii. 1.

8 Salvation belongeth unto the LORD:
Thy blessing be upon thy people. [Selah

4 For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments.
A Psalm of David.

1 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness;
Thou hast set me at large *when I was* in distress:
Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

Thou hast broken the teeth may be a prophetic perfect = 'I am confident Thou wilt completely break the power of the wicked.'

8. For—though the enemy has said, There is no salvation for him in God—all salvation, all victory comes from Thee, and in due time Thou wilt grant it unto Thy servant. So David already triumphs; but, as a true king, prays for his people rather than himself: 'These sheep, what have they done?' The Psalm closes with a benediction, 'Upon thy people be thy blessing!'

PSALM IV. AN EVENING HYMN: REST IN GOD'S FAVOUR.

This Psalm is bound up with the preceding, a companion in every sense. It is written by the same author, contains similar characteristic phrases, and breathes the same spirit. Yet the difference is no less marked, as in two landscape pictures by the same artist. If David be the writer, the Psalm will be ascribed to the same historical period as the third, but some time afterwards. The sense of safety is more assured, and the environment more tranquil.

In structure the Psalm may be subdivided, like the last, into four stanzas of two verses each, or we may arrange thus: 1; 2-5; 6-8.

This is the first occasion on which we meet the phrase, **For the Chief Musician.** For a note upon it, see Introd. p. 14. It may be said here that the word thus translated is used in 1 Chron. xxiii. 4 and 28-32 and 2 Chron. ii. 1 for the overseer whose business it was to direct the service of the temple and the workmen. The general significance of the root (*lit.* 'to shine') is one of excellence or marked ability in any profession; here it seems to refer to the conductor of the temple-music or the leader of the orchestra. See the account of the choir-leaders given in 1 Chron. xv. 17-21.

1. God of my righteousness means, God who alone can vindicate my cause and establish my righteousness. We find a preparation here for the more spiritual meaning of N.T.

The figure of 'enlargement' for deliverance from trouble is common in the Psalms. As a man in a cave, in dense woods, or in

O ye sons of men, how long shall my glory be turned into 2
dishonour?
How long will ye love vanity, and seek after false-
hood? [Selah
But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly 3
for himself:
The LORD will hear when I call unto him.
Stand in awe, and sin not: 4
Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be
still. [Selah
Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, 5

---

a narrow ravine, would feel 'cabined, cribbed, confined,' and long for scope and freedom, so the Psalmist is thankful to be 'set at large.' Render, 'when I was in straits: be gracious unto me,' &c. It is well to preserve the words 'grace' and 'gracious' for the root used here, implying as they do the free favour of God to the undeserving, rather than mercy towards the guilty.

2. My glory. There is no direct allusion here to God as in iii. 3. It is the personal and actual dishonour inflicted which is meant, though the adversaries are doing their utmost to prevent David from realizing his true glory in God. But there is an essential hollowness and falsity about the rebellion, which will ere long show itself.

3. set apart... for himself, always a mark of special distinction in the case of an Eastern sovereign; and God has His own ways of indicating His 'own possession.'

For the word **godly,** *chasid,* see detached note, p. 360. It is one of those words which requires a little history for its full explanation. In a sentence it may be said to denote one who is the object of the covenant-love of Jehovah, and who in his measure is faithful to the bond which it implies.

4. The rendering of R. V. marg., 'Be ye angry,' is from the LXX. It is used by Paul in Eph. iv. 26, with another kind of application. It does not well represent the meaning of the Hebrew root or the drift of the verse; we should render **Stand in awe,** and understand, 'Tremble with fear,' and so be preserved from offending. The second half of the verse must be interpreted in the same sense. It literally means 'Speak in your heart': or in modern phraseology, 'Let your own conscience speak in your quiet hours, and then you will **be still,**' that is, cease these frantic and futile efforts.

5. Render, 'Offer right sacrifices,' such as God will be well

And put your trust in the LORD.

6 Many there be that say, Who will shew us *any* good?
LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
More than *they have* when their corn and their wine are increased.

8 In peace will I both lay me down and sleep:
For thou, LORD, alone makest me dwell in safety.

5 For the Chief Musician; with the Nehiloth.
A Psalm of David.

1 Give ear to my words, O LORD,
Consider my meditation.

---

pleased with. The same phrase is used in Deut. xxxiii. 19, which forms a closer parallel than the reference to li. 19, where penitence is emphasized. The advice is to set themselves in right line and order, else all their sacrifices, like those of Saul in the case of Amalek, will only increase their condemnation.

6. It is easy to complain and to take gloomy views of the future. Absalom had tried to persuade the people that, if he were king, justice would indeed be done, 2 Sam. xv. 4. David points to the true source of light and happiness, using a phrase from the priestly benediction, Num. vi. 26. Whilst men are pessimistically crying, 'Will the good time never come?' the righteous are content to pray, 'Lord, lift the light of Thy countenance upon us.'

7. True joy may be found in time of straits, far more blessed than the reckless roystering of the ungodly, or the innocent enjoyment of God's good gifts of corn and wine.

8. The Psalmist would say, As formerly I was calm enough to sleep in the midst of danger, so now I will lay me down in peace and 'sleep at once,' the word indicating that the lying down and the sleeping come 'together,' no interval of watchfulness is caused by anxiety.

There is some doubt as to the meaning of **alone**, as the rendering of R. V. marg. 'in solitude' shows. The question is whether the word refers to God, 'Thou alone workest great marvels'; or to David, 'Thou makest me to dwell alone, apart from my foes and in perfect safety.' Either gives good sense, the latter probably is the meaning; compare Deut. xxxiii. 28.

PSALM V. A MORNING PRAYER BEFORE GOING TO THE SANCTUARY.

The title assigns this Psalm to David, and some commentators still accept his authorship. The chief objection is the use of the

Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God : 2
For unto thee do I pray.
O LORD, in the morning shalt thou hear my voice ; 3
In the morning will I order *my prayer* unto thee, and will keep watch.

---

word translated 'temple' in verse 7. The phrase 'house of God' presents no difficulty, but the word *heykāl*, which means properly 'palace' and is probably to be so understood in Amos viii. 3, seems quite inapplicable to the tent in which David had lodged the ark. The word is used, however, of Heaven, as the dwelling-place of God in Ps. xxix. 9, and it is applied to the sanctuary at Shiloh, 1 Sam. i. 9, as a kind of earthly counterpart to the heavenly abode. It might therefore be employed poetically as a synonym for the house of God, see xxvii. 4, 6. But it is to be said further, that the tone of the righteous man's complaint against evil-doers in verse 10 is hardly applicable to David, even in the time of Saul's persecution or Absalom's rebellion, while it is quite inconsistent with the position of a king on the throne. Rather does it apply to a later period when the pious and the ungodly Jews were sharply distinguished, as in the time of Jeremiah or the later Monarchy.

There appear to be three sections in the Psalm : Introduction, verses 1–3 ; God the ground of confidence, 4–7 ; Prayers for self, for enemies, for friends, 8–12.

The title indicates that the Psalm is to be set to music and sung to an accompaniment of wind instruments.

1. The word translated **meditation** implies an unspoken or, more probably, a lowly murmured petition. Thus did Hannah speak 'in her heart' ; her lips moved, but her voice was not heard, and Eli thought her intoxicated, 1 Sam. i. 13.

2. The word **cry** presents a strong contrast. We are accustomed to read the word in the Psalms as equivalent to 'call,' but it should be understood of a literal cry, strong and piercing. Both words point to strong emotion, very differently expressed.

3. The phrase **in the morning** stands in an emphatic position, and is twice repeated. It is to be understood literally ; the Psalm is a preparation for a new day, and is as the offering of a morning sacrifice.

This is more fully brought out by the phraseology of the verse. The word **order**, equivalent to 'arrange,' is used of (1) a sacrifice, Gen. xxii. 9, 'laid the wood in order,' and (2) a cause or argument, Job xxxii. 14, 'order words against me.'

To **keep watch** has been understood of the priest, who after arranging the sacrifice would look up to God for a favourable answer. Also as of a sentinel in 2 Sam. xviii. 24 and Hab. ii. 1,

4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness:
Evil shall not sojourn with thee.
5 The arrogant shall not stand in thy sight:
Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.
6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak lies:
The LORD abhorreth the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.
7 But as for me, in the multitude of thy lovingkindness will
I come into thy house:
In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.
8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine
enemies;

'I would set forth my cause or plea and watch for an answer.' The associations of the phrase are not decisive, but (1) is perhaps the more probable interpretation.

4. In the second half of the verse render as R. V. marg., 'The evil man cannot be guest of thine.' The idea is more fully brought out in Ps. xv and xxiv, see notes.

5, 6. Various kinds of evil are enumerated. For the first word, 'Fools' (R. V. marg.) is not strong enough, while **arrogant** is somewhat too strong. It means 'boasters,' loud, noisy, and obstreperous, rather than haughty, reserved, and arrogant; the element of folly must be included. **Stand in thy sight** is not the same thing as 'standing in the congregation,' i. 5; it means 'shall not lift up their heads in thy court,' or even venture into the presence of God. The light of that august presence-chamber is too keen and strong for such to encounter. A general word for evil-doers follows, with two kinds of wrong specified, violence and fraud. Equally detestable ('abhor' in verse 6 is a strong word for loathing) are the bold self-assertion of evil which strives to crush the good and the subtle craft which insidiously winds its way into power.

7. Strongly contrasted is the attitude of the Psalmist. *He* draws near to God, and the qualifications which make this possible are (1) the grace and lovingkindness of God which permit the approach; (2) his own reverent love of righteousness which prepares him rightly to approach the place where God dwells.

8. The theme of his prayer is that God will enable him to order his life aright in the presence of so many who neither fear God nor regard man. Read with R. V. marg., 'them that lie in wait for me'; the word is probably to be understood as of a beast of prey, a stronger power watching for a good opportunity of striking a blow.

Make thy way plain before my face.
For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; 9
Their inward part is very wickedness:
Their throat is an open sepulchre;
They flatter with their tongue.
Hold them guilty, O God; 10
Let them fall by their own counsels:
Thrust them out in the multitude of their transgressions;
For they have rebelled against thee.
But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice, 11
Let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them:
Let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.
For thou wilt bless the righteous; 12
O LORD, thou wilt compass him with favour as with a shield.

Make thy way (i. e. the way of righteousness) **plain**: not clear or evident, but level, straight, easy to travel.

9. There is no 'steadfastness,' consistency, in their utterances, nothing that one can trust to. The reason is that there is hollowness within; *lit.* 'destructions,' the plural indicating completeness; marg. 'a yawning gulf.' **Throat** and **tongue** stand for the way in which speech is used, flattering in tone, destructive if listened to. Thus did Christ denounce the Pharisees as whited sepulchres.

10. If God holds or declares them guilty, punishment is sure to follow. The persons in question occupy a position of authority, from which the Psalmist asks that they may be 'thrust down.' However powerful they may be on earth, they are rebels against God.

11, 12. Render, 'So shall all those that take refuge in thee rejoice, They shall,' &c. The meaning is, this is the only way for the land to prosper; when the evil are overthrown, the true-hearted will be happy and successful. The Psalmist and the righteous portion of the community identify themselves with God's kingdom in the world, and desire that His true citizens shall come to their own.

love thy name means delight in thy revealed character and desire, in the sense of the Lord's Prayer, that everywhere it should be known and hallowed.

In the last verse render, 'with favour, as with a buckler, thou dost encompass him.' Five words are used in the O. T. for 'shield,' two chiefly. The smaller, *magēn*, might be carried on the arm;

6 For the Chief Musician ; on stringed instruments, set to the Sheminith. A Psalm of David.

1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

---

the larger, *tsinnah*, which was large enough to be carried in front of a warrior by an attendant, is referred to here. See 1 Sam. xvii. 7 (41 ?).

PSALM VI. A SUFFERER'S 'MISERERE.'

A Psalm written in sore trouble. That the sorrow is personal rather than national—as a current fashion would make it—seems clear ; also that severe bodily sickness is its main element. The enemies whom the righteous man so often encounters in an evil world have contributed to the Psalmist's distress, but they stand in the background rather than in the foreground of the picture. He is still in danger of death, and in the former part of the Psalm calls for deliverance ; but before it closes he sees light dawn, and anticipates the time when the malice of those who add to his pain by declaring it to be a visitation from God for his sins will be utterly disappointed, and their taunts recoil on themselves to their shame and overthrow (verse 10).

The Psalm, in common with nearly all in the first Book, is assigned to David in the title. There is no period in David's life known to us to which it would be specially appropriate, nor is there anything in the language to enable us to fix date or author. Many parallel expressions are found in other Psalms and in the Book of Jeremiah, and it might well have proceeded from Jeremiah or a Job-like sufferer of his time. It has been used in the Church for centuries as the first of the Penitential Psalms ; and though it contains no expression of repentance for sin, the Psalm may be fitly employed by the godly who pray for help in time of trouble.

Different arrangements of the contents have been adopted, making two, three, or four subdivisions respectively. The simplest is 1–7, earnest prayer ; 8–10, anticipated triumph. The outburst in verse 8 is abrupt, but such sudden changes are not infrequent in the Psalter.

The title indicates the use of stringed instruments for accompaniment, apparently with double-bass viol. See Introd. p. 15.

1. A distinction is here recognized between two rods, one of fatherly chastisement in love, the other of severe punishment as an expression of Divine wrath. This distinction is marked in Jer. x. 24, 'Correct me, but with judgement ; not in anger' ; and in xlvi. 28, 'I will not make a full end, but correct thee in measure,' or 'I will correct thee with judgement, but can in no wise leave thee wholly unpunished.' The language of the Psalm seems to

Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am withered away: 2
O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.
My soul also is sore vexed: 3
And thou, O LORD, how long?
Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: 4
Save me for thy lovingkindness' sake.
For in death there is no remembrance of thee: 5
In Sheol who shall give thee thanks?
I am weary with my groaning; 6
Every night make I my bed to swim;
I water my couch with my tears.

---

have been earlier than Jeremiah, and may have suggested the thought to him. The significance of bodily punishment as reformatory chastisement is familiar in the O. T., but the Psalmist pleads that his pain goes beyond this.

2. Render, 'Be gracious unto me, for I languish.' The last word is used in Nah. i. 4 of Bashan and Lebanon as withering in a hot wind.

my bones: that is, the very framework of his body is racked by pain and shaken by exhausting disease.

3. Mind and body are closely connected, but in this case pain of mind is an effect, not a cause.

how long? is a plaintive plea which speaks for itself. It was frequently used by Calvin, a great bodily sufferer, and it is urged by the souls 'under the altar' in Rev. vi. 10. If trial is necessary, may it not end soon?

4, 5. The danger of death is not fully past, and the Psalmist pleads that for the sake of God's own lovingkindness he may not pass from the state of 'the living who praise thee' (Isa. xxxviii. 19) into that shadowy region where God can neither be remembered nor adored. It is useless to try to explain away the language of this and other similar passages. The prayer of Hezekiah in his sickness is closely parallel, and though in both cases the utterance is that of a dark mood, it is such as the pious would never have indulged in had the clear light of revelation illumined the future.

The Hebrew word **Sheol** is retained in R.V.—an awkward necessity. It is not, nor is likely to be, naturalized in English, yet we need a word corresponding to the Greek Hades to describe the shadowy state of the departed spirit, which was all that the Jew, except in rare moments of triumphant faith, had to anticipate when this life was over.

6, 7. The Psalmist is still in pain, and weak, passing sleepless

7 Mine eye wasteth away because of grief;
It waxeth old because of all mine adversaries.
8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;
For the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.
9 The LORD hath heard my supplication;
The LORD will receive my prayer.
10 All mine enemies shall be ashamed and sore vexed:
They shall turn back, they shall be ashamed suddenly.

7 Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush a Benjamite.

1 O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust:
Save me from all them that pursue me, and deliver me:

---

and weary nights. His hollow eyes and wasted cheeks tell of the severity of the disease which has sapped his strength. The reproaches of scornful foes have told upon him and helped to 'age' him.

8–10. But the very mention of these rouses him to sudden energy. Light dawns from above, and already he anticipates the answer to his prayer. Faith speaks both in the past and the future tenses, **hath heard** and **will receive**; the former is a prophetic perfect, for in some way a Divine manifestation has been granted to comfort him. Hence he anticipates that complete reversal of human judgements and transference of his own shame and dismay to his adversaries, which will come about when his full recovery to health is accomplished.

PSALM VII. AN APPEAL TO THE JUDGE OF ALL.

The title of this Psalm describes it as **Shiggaion,** a dithyrambic song of irregular structure and of impassioned character. It is attributed to David under circumstances which extant history does not enable us to identify. 'Cush the Benjamite' is not otherwise known to us, but he may well have been a partisan of the Benjamite Saul. Attempts made to identify him with Shimei, see 2 Sam. xviii. 21, or with an 'Ethiopian,' or with Saul himself, are obviously the resorts of ignorance. The framer of the title possessed another, and it may be an earlier or fuller tradition concerning David's history, than that recorded in the canonical books.

There is no good reason for questioning this tradition. The language of the Psalm is vigorous, and appropriate to David when persecuted by Saul. Modern commentators object that the

Lest he tear my soul like a lion, 2
Rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.
O LORD my God, if I have done this; 3
If there be iniquity in my hands;
If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; 4
(Yea, I have delivered him that without cause was mine adversary:)
Let the enemy pursue my soul, and overtake it; 5

---

mention of 'peoples' in verses 8 and 9, and of God as judge of the nations, points to a much later date than David's, but this is surely arbitrary. The chapters in 1 Sam. which describe David's life during his persecution by Saul present many interesting parallels with the language of the Psalm (compare 1 Sam. xxiv. 12, 18 with verses 3, 4), and no student of Hebrew literature can ignore that prophetic element which enables the writers of the Psalms and others to pass beyond the immediate circumstances of their own time and discern the principles of Divine government in the earth.

The Psalm has been variously divided, but seems to fall naturally into three parts: 1–5, a complaint; 6–10, an urgent plea; 11–17, confident expectation of judgement.

1, 2. Render, 'In thee, Jehovah my God, have I taken refuge.' Of several words used in the Psalms for 'trust,' it is well to preserve by this rendering the distinctiveness of the root used here.

There is nothing inconsistent between the mention of David's enemy as one, or as many. Whether Saul's rage be intended, or some directly personal insult on the part of one of his followers, it would be natural to cry out against all, while emphasizing the rage of one.

3, 4. A protestation of innocence on the part of the Psalmist. The word translated **iniquity** includes a perversion of right in two forms, set forth in the two clauses of verse 4. The more serious would be a wanton outrage on the peaceably disposed; the lesser would be a requital of evil to one who had wantonly attacked him. Both A. V. and R. V. read the latter clause as a parenthesis, but an alternative, simpler and on the whole preferable, would be to read:—

'If I have wrought evil upon him that was at peace with me,
Or despoiled him that without cause was mine adversary.'

Either rendering is appropriate in David's mouth in relation to Saul, as 1 Sam. xxiv and xxvi sufficiently show.

Yea, let him tread my life down to the earth,
And lay my glory in the dust. [Selah
6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger,
Lift up thyself against the rage of mine adversaries:
And awake for me; thou hast commanded judgement.
7 And let the congregation of the peoples compass thee about:
And over them return thou on high.
8 The LORD ministereth judgement to the peoples:
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and to mine integrity that is in me.
9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish thou the righteous:

---

5. The word **glory** here is used as synonymous with 'soul' and 'life,' but the meaning is not precisely the same. There is a climax in the three clauses—let them take my life with violence, and even bring shame upon my name and memory.

6. An appeal to God as if He needed to be aroused, that He would manifest that righteousness which the Psalmist knows to be characteristic of His government. Render, 'Awake for me, thou that hast commanded judgement,' that is, ordained it for others and art Thyself its source and fount.

7. The Psalmist desires that God would hold a great assize, as in Psalm 1 and Joel iii, that the righteous Judge of all would assume and exercise His functions. So far the meaning is clear, but the phraseology is not quite so clear. It may mean (1) Gather the nations together and return to heaven as the judgement-seat before whose bar they will be called; or (2) Judge on earth and return to heaven when the work is over; or (3) Resume the functions which it might appear have been for a while left in abeyance; or (4), with an alteration of the pointing, 'Take thy seat on high.' Of these either the first or the last is the best, according to whether the Massoretic pointing be preserved or not.

8. Judgement has begun: Jehovah is administering it: may the Psalmist be vindicated! He claims not to be free from all fault, but to be a man of integrity, guiltless of the treachery towards man with which he has been charged, and having his heart 'right with God'; see verse 10.

For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.
My shield is with God, 10
Which saveth the upright in heart.
God is a righteous judge, 11
Yea, a God that hath indignation every day.
If a man turn not, he will whet his sword; 12
He hath bent his bow, and made it ready.
He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; 13
He maketh his arrows fiery *shafts*.
Behold, he travaileth with iniquity; 14
Yea, he hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.
He hath made a pit, and digged it, 15
And is fallen into the ditch which he made.

9, 10. hearts and reins. In the O.T., and generally throughout the Bible, the heart is the centre of personal life and the reins are the seat of the emotions.

11. The Psalmist has been crying for justice, that God would set up His tribunal and declare sentence. But this must not be misunderstood. This verse shows that he knows well that God is always sitting as righteous Judge, that His wrath arises against the evil which day by day is being committed, and that punishment will surely come.

12, 13. The preparation for such punishment is here described. But weapons of war, sharp **sword** and **fiery arrows,** are named, rather than the cord and dungeon of a criminal court. These words are often used to describe the vengeance which the wicked inflict upon the righteous, and the text says that with their own scourge they shall be smitten. The secrecy and suddenness with which arrows strike make them fit symbols of Divine judgements, and His lightnings are the fire-darts which consume wherever they fall.

14. The figures of speech—conceive, travail, bring forth—which represent the birth and growth of sin, are not infrequent in the Bible; see especially Jas. i. 15. A sorry process of generation this, of which the end is at best nothingness. More usually the dire and unhallowed progeny proves full of mischief for the parent himself and for all besides. Compare Milton's terrible picture of Death as the offspring of Sin and Satan in *Paradise Lost,* Book ii.

15. Render the second clause, 'And falleth into the ditch which

16 His mischief shall return upon his own head,
And his violence shall come down upon his own pate.
17 I will give thanks unto the LORD according to his righteousness:
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

8 For the Chief Musician; set to the Gittith. A Psalm of David.

1 O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth!
Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens.

---

he was making.' The tense brings out the fact that even while digging deeply and with care, he is buried in his own trench, caught in his own trap.

16. A third figure, to set forth the same truth. The wicked man is 'hoist with his own petard,' holden with the cords of his own sins, Prov. v. 22; or, as in this verse, the stone which he has thrown at others recoils on his own head.

17. The storm settles into calm. The Psalmist returns to the strain of the first verse; but instead of the trust with which he had committed his cause to God, we find a note of praise to Him who has virtually answered his prayer. For a detached note on *El 'Elyon*, a name of 'God Most High,' used chiefly in poetry, see p. 359.

PSALM VIII. THE GLORY OF GOD SEEN IN THE TRUE DIGNITY OF MAN.

The subject of this Psalm is not, as is often represented, the glory of God in nature, nor the glory of man, nor the glory of the Messiah as such, but the glory of God reflected in the fact that He has made a creature in many respects so insignificant and puny as man, lord of creation around, because he is vicegerent of God upon the earth. The glory of the heavens is doubtless noted in passing, the glories of the earthly creation also, and of man to whom the dominion of earth is given; yet is he but a babe, ignorant and frail, a mere speck in the presence of the vast universe as seen in the nightly sky. Precisely at this point the glory of God appears, who has given to such an infant of days such dignity and capacity; God has been mindful of him, and given him a place in the universal order little less than Divine.

Modern astronomy has in no way weakened the lessons of this Psalm. It has rather deepened and intensified them, while biology and psychology and modern science as a whole have added to their

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou 2
established strength,
Because of thine adversaries,

---

meaning on the human side. With the religious aspects of these truths physical science is not concerned, but the Psalmist has touched bed-rock in the relations between nature and man and God, which no changes in the extent of our knowledge has disturbed, or can disturb.

The Psalm is quoted in Heb. ii. 6, where the original meaning of verses 4–6 is brought out and raised to a higher level. Man, says the writer of the Epistle, has not yet fulfilled his high functions or realized his true glory. We see not yet this lordship of his attained, but in and through the Incarnation we see in One who took on him our nature and in it submitted to death, crowned with glory and honour, the pledge and earnest of the fulfilment of all the high promise of this Psalm, and much more besides.

The title attributes the Psalm to David. Certainly it was written before Job vii. 17 and Ps. cxliv. 4, which make use of its language in very different ways. If written by David—and there is no good reason to the contrary—it is not probable that it was written during his shepherd-days, but rather as the late result of earlier meditations under the stars.

For the phrase 'On the Gittith' see Introd. p. 15. It has been understood to mean (1) accompanied by an instrument named from Gath; (2) to a tune of Gath; (3) a march of the Gittite guard; (4) to be sung to the tune of a vintage-hymn. The first and the last suppositions appear the most likely.

1. Render,

'Jehovah, our Lord, how glorious is thy name in all the earth!
Thou whose majesty reacheth above the heavens.'

Yahweh is here the covenant name of God, the title 'our Lord' being added to indicate Israel's close relationship as a community to Him. The Hebrew of the second clause it is almost impossible to translate as now pointed. The renderings of A. V. and R. V. imply a different text. The translation given above is based on a slightly changed vocalization.

2. 'Ordained strength,' or 'established a stronghold,' but the latter implies somewhat too bold a figure. The LXX reads 'perfected praise,' and is so quoted in Matt. xxi. 16. The phrase does not refer to those who are children in age, though the application of the words made in the N. T. is natural and beautiful. Childhood does furnish its own witness to God. The thought of the verse, however, is that God establishes His own glory by means of man, who is but as a babe in the universe.

That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?
5 For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honour.
6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet:
7 All sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field;
8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

Render, 'To still the enemy and the vengeful.' The nobler word **avenger** is not in place here. Does this point to non-Israelitic foes? The question cannot be definitely answered, but it is better to understand the phrase quite generally of all who oppose God.

3, 4. This passage implies a night scene, as Ps. xix sets forth the splendours of the sunshine and the day. Render, 'What is frail man?' The word *Enosh* denotes man in his weakness, while the parallel expression **son of man** describes the race of man generally as man upon the earth. The word **visit** is sometimes applied to judgement, Ps. lix. 5; Exod. xxxii. 34: sometimes to a coming of God in mercy, Jer. xxix. 10; Luke vii. 16. Here it clearly means 'remember and care for.' Cheyne says, 'Visitation is the Hebrew equivalent for special providence.'

The bitter turn given to these words in Job vii. 17 shows that when that chapter was written the phrase must have been some time known and familiar.

5, 6. Render, 'For thou hast made him little less than Divine.' The LXX Version refers *Elohim* to the angels, and is followed in Heb. ii. 6. But most interpreters translate as R. V., and the distinct reference to Gen. i. 26 throughout the context confirms this.

7, 8. Render, 'Sheep and oxen, all of them.' The creatures are enumerated by kinds as in Gen. i. 21, but only as representing all creation. If modern science has emphasized man's physical kinship with the higher animals, it has indefinitely widened and

O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth! 9

For the Chief Musician; set to Muth-labben. A Psalm of David. 9
I will give thanks unto the LORD with my whole heart; 1
I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.

---

deepened the gulf between the two in other respects. Man's 'natural' sovereignty was never so clear as to-day.

9. The last verse strikes again the same note as the first. But, as one may say, it sounds an octave higher, after the intervening melody—the thesis is reiterated with emphasis after the proof and illustration given. It would be well if the first and last verses of the Psalm were printed apart from the rest, as a double utterance of its great theme.

PSALM IX. THANKSGIVING FOR THE OVERTHROW OF ENEMIES.

The relation between Pss. ix and x is said to present 'an unsolved literary problem.' The two are closely connected, but amongst many theories as to the history of this connexion two may be said to divide the field. The two Psalms may have originally formed one whole, as they do now in the LXX and other versions, or Ps. x may form a later addition to a much earlier composition. Together they form an acrostic, very irregularly constructed. In Ps. ix are the rudiments of an alphabetic arrangement. In verse 1 each of the four lines begins with *Aleph*, then the verses are arranged in pairs, the pairs beginning with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet successively, but the *Daleth* section is missing. In verse 6 the *He* cannot be traced according to the present text (a slight change of reading would, however, remedy this), and verse 18 begins with *Koph* instead of *Caph*. In x. 1 the alphabetic arrangement is taken up again, but dropped till verse 12 is reached, when the pairs begin with the last four letters of the alphabet.

There is considerable resemblance in the phraseology of the two Psalms, but the whole situation in the two cases appears to be different, and it seems better to regard Ps. x as a later Psalm composed as an appendix, or a continuation of the earlier under different conditions, rather than as part of a Psalm which from the beginning was one whole. Delitzsch says, 'If we read Ps. ix along with Ps. x, *uno tenore*, the latter becomes a tail which disfigures it.'

If this view is correct, Ps. ix might be Davidic, as it presents many points of contact with Ps. vii, while Ps. x would date from the later Monarchy, or after the Exile. Or x. 3–11 may have been

2 I will be glad and exult in thee:
I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High.
3 When mine enemies turn back,
They stumble and perish at thy presence.
4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause;
Thou satest in the throne judging righteously.
5 Thou hast rebuked the nations, thou hast destroyed the wicked,

---

worked in from another Psalm, as this section breaks the structure and presents characteristics of its own. The similarity of language in Pss. ix and x is thought by some to be so striking—'harsh, obscure and lapidarically terse,' Delitzsch calls it—that they consider the two must be ascribed to one author, though not originally forming one Psalm.

There is no distinctly traceable connexion of thought between the pairs of verses in Ps. ix, but it is distinctly national, as Ps. x is strongly personal, and the former as clearly gives thanks for victories already achieved, closing with confident anticipation of further triumph, as the latter complains of the predominance of evil in one community.

The title, **set to Muth-labben,** must be understood as the name of a melody, 'Death to the son.' It is useless to conjecture its meaning further. It may be that the text is corrupt, as the versions appear to follow another reading.

1, 2. An outburst of praise inspired by a victory apparently recent. Divine intervention on behalf of Israel is often described as 'a marvellous work.' The line between the natural and the supernatural was not very closely defined for the pious Jew, who could trace the hand of God alike in the rising of a storm, the outbreak of a pestilence, or the dissension of enemies among themselves leading to their defeat; and would number all these among the 'wonderful doings' of the Most High. Compare lxxviii. 12, xcviii. 1.

3, 4. Join these verses closely with the former and render, 'Because mine enemies turn back, They stumble and perish at thy presence.' The defeat is fresh in recollection, and is marked by three stages—retreat, stumbling, fall and final overthrow. But all is traced to the action of God, who is represented as occupying the seat of judgement, and giving sentence in favour of Israel and against their enemies by giving the victory to the former.

5, 6. A striking description of complete overthrow. The

Thou hast blotted out their name for ever and ever.
The enemy are come to an end, they are desolate for ever; 6
And the cities which thou hast overthrown,
Their very memorial is perished.
But the LORD sitteth *as king* for ever: 7
He hath prepared his throne for judgement.
And he shall judge the world in righteousness, 8
He shall minister judgement to the peoples in uprightness.
The LORD also will be a high tower for the oppressed, 9
A high tower in times of trouble;
And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; 10
For thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.
Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: 11
Declare among the people his doings.
For he that maketh inquisition for blood remembereth 12
them:

---

enemy appear to be nations around, who fear not God. The cities are described as 'perpetual ruins.' The Hebrew word for 'destroy' means 'uproot,' the destruction is 'radical' and—always a striking feature in the East, where traditions are so long and carefully preserved—'the very remembrance of them is perished.'

7, 8. The Psalmist passes from thinking of the past to confidence in the future, especially dwelling on the thought of God as king of the whole earth. Note R. V. **peoples**; A. V. renders 'people,' which is misleading as regards a cardinal feature of the Psalm. The nations of the whole habitable earth belong to God, and their affairs shall be administered by Him in equity.

9, 10. Hence will be realized what appears to the Oriental, unaccustomed to equitable rule, as a description of a 'millennium,' that the oppressed shall always find a helper, a stronghold against the prevalent oppressor. The defence which the knight's castle or the walled town furnished in the Middle Ages against lawless bands of spoilers, the name of God shall be, as a high tower whereinto one may run and be safe.

11, 12. Praise is in these verses rendered to God because He remembers the **poor** or 'meek' (R. V. marg.) or 'humble,' who cannot defend themselves. There is One who 'requireth blood,' so the phrase should be rendered, as in Gen. ix. 5, 'Whoso sheddeth

He forgetteth not the cry of the poor.
13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD;
Behold my affliction *which I suffer* of them that hate me,
Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death;
14 That I may shew forth all thy praise:
In the gates of the daughter of Zion,
I will rejoice in thy salvation.
15 The nations are sunk down in the pit that they made:
In the net which they hid is their own foot taken.
16 The LORD hath made himself known, he hath executed judgement:
The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.
[Higgaion. Selah
17 The wicked shall return to Sheol,

---

man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' Though this be rude justice, it represents a standard of retribution higher than in many ages and countries has proved attainable. The text hesitates between two words in verse 12, 'poor' and 'meek.' In the Hebrew these two are closely akin in root and meaning, and often confused with one another; the reference here is apparently to the 'afflicted,' those bowed down under the oppressor.

13, 14. Some critics are disposed to advocate a change of tenses in verse 13: 'God hath been gracious: Thou hast lifted me up.' But the blending of praise and prayer is common in the Psalms; Delitzsch supposes this to be a prayer before battle. The victory already gained may not have been so complete as to preclude the necessity for prayer that God would carry on His work of deliverance. The Psalmist asks that, having been delivered from imminent death, he may show forth all God's praise **in the gates of the daughter of Zion,** i. e. publicly, in the place of concourse—market-place or town-square, as moderns would say—amongst the citizens of the victorious capital.

15, 16. The Psalmist encourages himself by the manifestation of Divine righteousness which has taken place before his eyes, and so prepares the way for the confident expectation expressed in the next stanza, 17 and 18.

Higgaion and **Selah** are musical notes, probably indicating a solemn and a triumphant interlude respectively. See Introd. p. 15.

17, 18. 'Turned into hell' (A. V.) gives an entire misconception of the Psalmist's meaning. **Return to Sheol** simply means 'be overthrown and die.' The strict meaning of 'return' should not

Even all the nations that forget God.
For the needy shall not alway be forgotten, 18
Nor the expectation of the poor perish for ever.
Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: 19
Let the nations be judged in thy sight.
Put them in fear, O LORD: 20
Let the nations know themselves to be but men. [Selah

Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? 10
Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?

---

be pressed. It may have reference to Gen. iii. 19, and man's going *back* to the dust from which he was taken, but such passages as Job i. 21, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither,' indicate a less literal use of the word. Notice the name 'Elohim,' the God of the whole earth, not 'Yahweh,' the covenant God of Israel.

The word **poor** in verse 18 is not equivalent to the 'afflicted' of verse 12. Render, 'The patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever.' The moral quality of those who have learned the lesson of affliction is intended here.

19, 20. Man is frail and mortal, but he is too apt to forget this in presumptuous rebellion against God and defiance of the law of righteousness. The Psalmist prays that God will show the nations who have proudly exalted themselves against Israel, and who may easily do so again, their inherent weakness, that they may learn to reverence Jehovah, Israel's God.

PSALM X. A PRAYER OF THE OPPRESSED.

The enemy in this Psalm, or part of a Psalm, must be understood to mean the wicked within the pale of Israel, and the complaint of the Psalmist concerns the condition of the righteous within his own community. A different state of society from that described in Ps. ix is implied here, a much more considerable difference than that 'change of mood' which Cheyne thinks has caused 'a later editor to bisect the Psalm.'

No very definite outline of thought is discernible, but we may say that verses 1 and 2 describe the state of the land generally; verses 3-11 contain a sharply defined characterization of the wicked which may very well have come from another source; while verses 12-18, including stanzas from Koph to Tau, the last four letters of the alphabet, appeal to God to intervene and break the power of the ungodly.

2 In the pride of the wicked the poor is hotly pursued;
Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.
3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire,
And the covetous renounceth, *yea*, contemneth the LORD.
4 The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, *saith*, He
will not require *it*.
All his thoughts are, There is no God.
5 His ways are firm at all times;
Thy judgements are far above out of his sight:
As for all his adversaries, he puffeth at them.
6 He saith in his heart, I shall not be moved:
To all generations I shall not be in adversity.

1, 2. 'Why dost thou hide thyself?' God is sometimes said to hide His eyes, Isa. i. 15; sometimes His ears, i. e. be deaf, Lam. iii. 56; sometimes, as here, Himself, see Isa. xlv. 15. Such a state of mind as that described in the latter part of Ps. ix is remote; the conditions have changed and the tone of the Psalmist's plea differs accordingly.

3. Here begins a section which fits fairly well into the body of the Psalm, but it has been adjudged as of different origin, partly because of the breaking of the alphabetic structure, partly because of its abrupt opening, and partly because of the characteristic style. 'The description of the wicked is as a black rock damming the river, but it flows on beneath and emerges beyond.' (Maclaren.) Render, 'And in his covetousness renounceth'; boasting that he has all he wants without acknowledging God, the wicked man renounces all allegiance, and even ventures in practice to despise God.

4. As elsewhere the Psalmist says, 'I am—prayer,' so here he says, 'All the thoughts of the wicked are—no God.' The word for **thoughts** means properly deep and artful devices, hence it is not the ideas merely, but the whole course of action of the wicked which is said to imply that there is no God, or none who takes notice of men.

5, 6. His ways are firm. Compare lxxiii. 4. 5, 'Their strength is firm.' The experience might be illustrated from W. Watson's bitter poem:—

> 'Fortune, I fear, hath oftenest come,
> When we forgot, when we forgot!'

The man in prosperity scorns the possibility of change.

His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression: 7
Under his tongue is mischief and iniquity.
He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: 8
In the covert places doth he murder the innocent:
His eyes are privily set against the helpless.
He lurketh in the covert as a lion in his den: 9
He lieth in wait to catch the poor:
He doth catch the poor, when he draweth him in his net.
He croucheth, he boweth down, 10
And the helpless fall by his strong ones.
He saith in his heart, God hath forgotten: 11
He hideth his face; he will never see it.
Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: 12
Forget not the poor.
Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God, 13
And say in his heart, Thou wilt not require *it*?

---

7. A description of the evil words of the evil man; he is proficient in (1) railing, (2) lying, and (3) bullying; there is a store of such precious wares as it were hoarded in his mouth and **under his tongue,** for 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.'

8–11. Various kinds of ill treatment are inflicted on those who are too feeble to resist it. The unwalled villages were open to the depredations of men who were little better than brigands. Jephthah gathered such a band of discontented 'vain fellows' round him, Judges xi. 3; the passage Prov. i. 10 describes their habits at length; compare also Hos. vi. 9, and the man in Luke x. 30 who fell among robbers on the Jericho road. The imperfect tenses used through the paragraph indicate persistent habit.

An emphasis is laid on the ambush, the secret preparation before the open violence. The figure sometimes seems to be that of a wild beast lurking for prey, sometimes (verse 10) as of a slave-hunter dragging his victim into imprisonment, and bending and crouching the better to take him unawares. In verse 11 is a fresh statement of the God-ignoring, God-contemning spirit in which this compound of the oppressor and the coward carries on his nefarious practices.

12, 13. An appeal that God will manifest Himself, and show that this arrogant self-confidence is vain.

14 Thou hast seen *it*; for thou beholdest mischief and spite,
to take it into thy hand:
The helpless committeth *himself* unto thee;
Thou hast been the helper of the fatherless.
15 Break thou the arm of the wicked;
And as for the evil man, seek out his wickedness till thou
find none.
16 The LORD is King for ever and ever:
The nations are perished out of his land.
17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the meek:
Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear
to hear:
18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,
That man which is of the earth may be terrible no more.

---

14. The Psalmist is sure that God sees all this and watches, not 'that He may require it' (A. V.), but that he may 'take it into His own hand,' rule and over-rule, as He did the evil-doing of Joseph's brethren (Gen. xlv. 5, 8). God has been the helper of the needy in the past, but the Psalmist desires to see a fresh proof of His power.

15. seek out may mean (1) require, i. e. punish, or (2) extirpate, destroy. The former seems to be the meaning; as a strict judge may do his work so thoroughly that there shall be a clean sheet at the next assize.

16. A note of triumph in the midst of trouble, as in Ps. ix a pleading note occurs in the midst of triumph. The mention of **nations** again reminds us of Ps. ix. Probably **are perished** is a prophetic perfect: God is King, and will not let the usurper rule long in a realm of which He says, 'The land is mine,' Lev. xxv. 23.

17, 18. The faith of the saints shall be justified. In the last line read, 'That mortals of the earth may be terrible no more.' Echoes of Ps. ix are heard again ere the close. Puny man is to be shown his true position. 'Dressed in a little brief authority,' he has played 'fantastic tricks before high heaven,' but he shall do so no longer. When the God who has been hiding Himself takes their mischief and spite into His own hand, its powerlessness shall be seen, and, in the words of another Psalm, the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

For the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David. 11

In the LORD put I my trust: 1
How say ye to my soul,
Flee *as* a bird to your mountain?
For, lo, the wicked bend the bow, 2
They make ready their arrow upon the string,
That they may shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.
If the foundations be destroyed, 3

PSALM XI. THE SONG OF THE STEADFAST.

A true lyric, flowing forth at one rush of the stream, broken somewhat in its fall, but with many glancing lights and colours, as well as shadows, playing over it. It is bright, cheerful, trustful—Greatheart's reply to Faintheart. If the marks of David's style are freshness, vividness and force, such as belong to an early age of psalmody; a clear, direct outlook, like Chaucer's, upon the facts of life; a just perception of the bearing of these upon religion and the bearing of religion upon them; this Psalm may well be his. It suits David's position at several points of his history, perhaps best the time when he was at the court of Saul, see 1 Sam. xviii. His foes are active; his friends counsel flight. A coward or a merely prudent man would comply; a brave man would rally his powers to meet the danger; a saint holds his ground, trusting in God.

The Psalm falls easily into two parts: verses 1–3, the danger; verses 4–7, the grounds of confidence. But the Psalmist's complete confidence is first stated, then the difficulties in its way are allowed to have full scope, after which they are triumphantly surmounted.

1. Read, 'In Jehovah have I taken refuge.' The whole issue is here. A desertion of the post means a treachery to faith and Him in whom faith reposes. R. V. marg. 'Flee, ye birds,' addressed to David and his companions. David speaks of being hunted like a partridge on the mountains (1 Sam. xxvi. 20), and 'chasing sore like a bird' seems to have been proverbial (Lam. iii. 52).

2. This verse and the next form part of the address of timid friends. The description of the machinations of wicked foes is intended to intimidate and shake confidence.

shoot in darkness is a literal rendering, but perhaps 'unseen' is better in English. Men may stab in the dark, but not shoot arrows.

3. Render, 'When the foundations are being destroyed.' Timid counsellors plead further that there is no safety when in

What can the righteous do?
4 The LORD is in his holy temple,
The LORD, his throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.
5 The LORD trieth the righteous:
But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.
6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares;
Fire and brimstone and burning wind shall be the portion of their cup.
7 For the LORD is righteous; he loveth righteousness:
The upright shall behold his face.

---

the state the very authorities are arrayed against goodness, or when the fundamental principles of righteousness are disregarded. The marginal rendering, 'What hath the righteous wrought?' leads to the same point by another road—no help is to be looked for, therefore flee while there is time.

4. Another strain begins here. Whether the persecuted man flees or stands his ground depends on where his eyes are fixed. The Psalmist looks upwards. Whilst timid counsellors round him see danger from man, he sees Jehovah on His throne, with 'the eyes of His glory' watching all. The **temple** here is clearly declared to be heaven, and this suggests a wider use of the word elsewhere.

his eyelids try: say some commentators, because the eyelids contract when one would examine an object closely. More probably 'eyelids' is only used as parallel to 'eyes'; the word 'try' properly refers to the smelting of minerals.

5. Render, 'Jehovah by trial approveth the righteous'; in P.B.V., 'alloweth,' which has the same meaning. God tries or proves all, but approves only those who come well out of trial. Compare the double rendering possible in Phil. i. 9, 'discriminate things that differ,' and 'approve things excellent.'

6. One version reads 'coals of fire,' instead of **snares.** But the Psalmist is not afraid of mixed metaphors; see below, **the portion of their cup.** Whether the reference in **fire and brimstone and burning wind** be to the destruction of Sodom, or the eruption of a volcano, or the simoom of the desert, the idea is that from the skies comes a tempest which seizes the fugitive, entangles his footsteps, and then suffocates and destroys him.

7. A foundation is laid here which cannot be destroyed.

For the Chief Musician ; set to the Sheminith. A Psalm of David. **12**

Help, LORD ; for the godly man ceaseth ; 1
For the faithful fail from among the children of men.
They speak vanity every one with his neighbour : 2
With flattering lip, and with a double heart, do they speak.

Jehovah is righteous in Himself, therefore 'He loveth righteous deeds,' as R. V. marg. has it, and only what He loves can ultimately stand. In the last clause there is ambiguity. A. V. has 'His countenance doth behold the upright,' i. e. God sees, approves, and will maintain their cause : R. V., with the best moderns, **The upright shall behold his face,** i. e. they shall be admitted to His presence, regarded with His favour, abide in His home and share the unspeakable joy of the Beatific Vision. The latter of the two renderings is undoubtedly to be preferred : it is not usual to say that God's face beholds, but that He beholds, and there need be no discrepancy between this and the statement that none can see God's face and live. The conditions of this spiritual vision are left all undetermined ; like some other brief sayings of the Psalmist, the phrase remains in its simplicity, splendidly undefined.

PSALM XII. PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL AMONG THE FAITHLESS.

This Psalm also was written in a time of persecution to express unshaken confidence in God. Some writers ascribe it to David during his life as an outlaw, but it bears marks of a later age. The description of the state of society in verses 1 and 2 finds a much more apt parallel in the writings of the prophets, e. g. Hosea or Jeremiah. The mention of the flatterers and their hypocrisy is a part of the same picture.

The Psalm falls into two equal parts : verses 1-4, the prayer ; 5-8, the answer. For the musical phrase 'set to the Sheminith,' see Introd. p. 15.

1. The word **Help** or 'Save' is a comprehensive one, and must be understood as including more than 'put in safety' (verse 6). The whole Psalm is an exposition of what the writer desires.

the godly man ceaseth, &c. The danger arises from the failure in the Psalmist's time of two virtues very apt to disappear in an artificial state of society—kindliness and fidelity. Compare the picture in Isa. i. 16, 17, 23. What is needed is the steadfast, God-fearing character, kindly and helpful in all human relations, but staunch as only religious principle can make a man. The plea of this verse is that such men are no longer to be found.

2. On the other hand, unreality, deception, and inconsistency, three vices closely akin, abound everywhere. The man with **a double heart** is the opposite of one with 'a single eye.' The

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips,
The tongue that speaketh great things:
4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail;
Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?
5 For the spoiling of the poor, for the sighing of the needy,
Now will I arise, saith the LORD;
I will set him in safety at whom they puff.
6 The words of the LORD are pure words;
As silver tried in a furnace on the earth,
Purified seven times.
7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD,
Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.
8 The wicked walk on every side,
When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.

---

antithesis to the combined falsehood and unkindness of these men is admirably expressed in Paul's phrase, 'dealing truly in love,' Eph. iv. 15.

3, 4. The punishment which these flatterers and traitors deserve will come—may it come! True, their self-confidence is complete. Their clever tongues, they think and say, can accomplish anything; but God is not deceived, and will not be mocked, in His own time He will overthrow their devices.

5. Now will I arise, saith the LORD, &c. In dramatic fashion the Psalmist represents God as speaking and preparing to act. In the last line render, with R. V. marg., 'I will set him in the safety for which he pants.'

6. The trustworthiness of the Divine word is joyfully recalled; what God has promised He will perform. The brevity of the phrase **a furnace on the earth** makes it obscure. The reference is to the molten metal flowing down from the furnace to the ground.

seven times, that is, completely.

7, 8. Some of the best critics would transpose these two verses. Certainly the last verse forms an anti-climax, and the seventh would bring the Psalm to a triumphant conclusion. But we are not at liberty to re-arrange the Psalmist's thoughts, and the closing words as they stand bring back the sad picture of verse 1 which seems to be darkening the writer's vision.

Still, the stress of the thought lies on verse 7, God knows and will preserve His own. That is the fundamental, all-important fact, though **when vileness is exalted among the sons of men,**

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. 13

How long, O LORD, wilt thou forget me for ever? 1
How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?
How long shall I take counsel in my soul, 2
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?
Consider *and* answer me, O LORD my God: 3
Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of* death;
Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; 4

---

the wicked stalk and strut to and fro, and the world is upside-down. We need not think that the Psalmist has lost courage at the last moment, though, as Perowne says, 'the relapse into gloom at the close is unparalleled.' His faith has not failed, but he cries 'Help!' once more in a tone which he is assured will be heard.

PSALM XIII. *Quo usque Domine!* 'HOW LONG, O LORD?'

This Psalm begins in as low a key as the last, but it ends in complete joy of faith. The writer is apparently afraid of one personal enemy, in whom is concentrated the hostility of many. If David wrote the Psalm, it could be only in reference to Saul; but in all probability it belongs to a much later period, and the language is appropriate, like that of Pss. x and xii, to the condition of the pious community in Israel in the later pre-Exilic period.

The Psalm was a favourite with Calvin, and inspired the evening hymn of Anatolius, used so long in the Eastern Church and popularized by many translations. It contains three stanzas which may be thus summarized: verses 1 and 2, trouble; verses 3 and 4, prayer; verses 5 and 6, relief.

1. There is no real contradiction in the question, 'How long wilt thou forget-for-ever?' The last three words form one idea. Sorrow makes the hours drag, and the Psalmist asks how long he is to be utterly God-forsaken, as if lost in endless oblivion. The obvious contradiction in the mode of expression is eloquent of his state of mind. Or possibly the sufferer recognizes the suggestion that he may be permanently forgotten as a temptation, and appeals to God to drive it away.

2. Take counsel means make plans, however hopeless: as a prisoner spends time in devising impossible methods of escape.

3. Render, 'Behold and answer . . . lest I sleep in death.' If God looks his way, his **eyes** will be 'lightened,' i. e. he will receive fresh strength and courage. Compare the case of Jonathan fatigued and faint, 1 Sam. xiv. 27, 29.

Lest mine adversaries rejoice when I am moved.
5 But I have trusted in thy mercy;
My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation:
6 I will sing unto the LORD,
Because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

14 For the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David.

1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.
They are corrupt, they have done abominable works;

5, 6. The joy of faith. Nothing has happened to change the Psalmist's tone, except that 'everything' which is implied in the revelation of Divine truth, and the dawning of new light upon the soul within. 'It is the Lord who rises, with healing in His wings.' The storms still rage outside, but David, as Luther says, 'sings quietly his little Psalm.'

PSALM XIV. A SIGH OVER A GODLESS WORLD.

To what period and conditions of life does this Psalm refer? Several data are before us which enable us to give an approximate answer to this question. (1) It describes a depraved and corrupt age. Some have supposed the reference in verse 2 to be to primitive times, Gen. vi, xi, &c., but the writer is adapting the language which describes an earlier generation to his own. (2) 'My people' in verse 4 must indicate either a period of oppression of Israel by a foreign power, or of the godly within the nation by evil rulers, or both. (3) Verse 7 might seem to imply a post-Exilic date: but (*a*) the phrase 'turn the captivity' may be used of a general restoration of fortune, see note; and (*b*) this verse may be a liturgical addition. (4) The Psalm occurs again in a later collection as Ps. liii, with some slight modifications, the name Yahweh being changed to Elohim, together with other changes discussed in their place. Ps. liii is apparently the later form, and its place in a later collection implies the lapse of a considerable interval.

We come to the conclusion, then, that this Psalm was written under the later Monarchy; perhaps in the time of Jeremiah, the condition of the nation at the time presenting several parallel features. But it may have been somewhat earlier, say in the time of Manasseh.

It may be divided thus: verses 1–3, description of prevailing corruption; 4–6, God is mindful of His own; 7, concluding prayer.

1. On the word **fool,** see a more complete study in the

There is none that doeth good.
The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children 2
of men,
To see if there were any that did understand,
That did seek after God.
They are all gone aside; they are together become filthy; 3
There is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Introduction to Vol. II. We may remark here, however, the moral and practical character of Jewish thought. 'Wisdom' always has reference to character, and 'folly' is never far removed from wickedness. An intellectual element of course is essential to wisdom, but it is not prominent as in Hellenism.

Here the 'fool' is not a speculative atheist, but a man who in practice lives as if there were no God that judgeth in the earth. Compare Jer. v. 12, 'They have denied the Lord, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us'; Rom. i. 28, 'They refused to have God in their knowledge.'

said in his heart means 'persuaded himself,' so that this maxim became a ruling principle of action. Here is sufficient proof of folly, says the Psalmist; it is further shown in the **corrupt** and **abominable** deeds which spring from depraved and godless hearts. Both the earliest and latest Scriptures illustrate these 'abominations' only too abundantly. The picture of the world before the Flood, whencesoever derived, rivals in its lurid colours of corruption the Rome of the Apocalypse.

2. The language is borrowed from Gen. vi, and is strongly anthropomorphic in character. God is represented as permitting man to go on in his own ways, but from time to time intervening. He **looked down** after closing or averting His eyes (the word is used of bending forward out of a window in 2 Kings ix. 30), or He would 'come down' after comparative inactivity. As in the building of the tower of Babel, wickedness is suffered to ripen before it is cut off. The Titans are struck down when Pelion piled on Ossa approaches the gates of heaven.

To **understand** or 'deal wisely' is impossible, according to O. T. teaching, to those who do not 'seek God.' Practical mastery of life is given only to men who know something, and desire to know more, of the Divine will.

3. They are all gone aside, &c.: a sweeping condemnation, expressing in intelligible hyperbole widespread corruption. The verses are quoted in Rom. iii. 10–12. Clauses from other Psalms interwoven by Paul in verses 14–17 are found in some leading MSS.

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
And call not upon the LORD.
5 There were they in great fear:
For God is in the generation of the righteous.
6 Ye put to shame the counsel of the poor,
Because the LORD is his refuge.

---

of the LXX here. They have made their way into the P.B.V. through the Vulgate, Coverdale translating from the Latin.

In Jer. v. 1 the diligent search of the prophet discovers none in Jerusalem who are doing righteousness or seeking truth; so in Zeph. i. 12 God is represented as 'searching Jerusalem with candles' to punish the practical atheism of the time. The word **filthy** is from a root meaning to turn sour, hence, become tainted, putrid.

4. Supply the words, 'God speaketh.' Are these offenders worse than ox or ass (Isa. i. 3), and have they not sense enough to understand the folly and evil of their ways? Or, as some versions have it, shall they not be made to know, i. e. feel, by the sharp punishment which will overtake them?

my people may mean the godly few in Israel, or Israel itself as God's people under the hand of the oppressor. The latter is in this case the more likely. **Eat up . . .** as **they eat bread** may imply more than a metaphor. Jer. ii. 3 speaks of 'a devouring of Israel,' and verse 17 describes the invaders 'eating up the harvest which thy sons and daughters should eat.'

5. Render, 'There feared they with great fear.' The word 'there' is emphatic; the Psalmist vividly realizes a spot where a blow fell, as with the suddenness of lightning. Some refer it to the Egyptians at the Red Sea, surely too far-fetched an allusion. Baethgen and others suppose a reference to an unknown event of the nature of a judgement. Perhaps better, God is represented as looking out upon the evil-doing, He speaks in remonstrance, and then panic must seize the offenders, 'they feared' being a prophetic perfect. For, it is added, **God is in the generation of the righteous**, He 'knows their way,' He cares for and will vindicate their cause.

6. Render, 'Ye would put to shame'—or 'frustrate'—'the counsel of the afflicted. Yea, but Jehovah is his refuge.' R.V. marg. gives substantially the same meaning, 'Ye did put to shame . . . but.' The 'counsel' of the oppressed points to some good work they had undertaken, as e. g. the building of the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah.

Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! 7
When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Then shall Jacob rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

A Psalm of David. 15

LORD, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle? 1
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, 2
And speaketh truth in his heart.

---

7. For the phrase 'turn the captivity' in its general use see Job xlii. 10, where it means 'restored to fortune'; Zeph. ii. 7, 'visit and bring again their captivity'; in Amos ix. 14 and Hos. vi. 11 it is used of the earlier captivity of Israel under Assyria.

This verse may be a liturgical addition. Such a practice was common; a parallel is found in the doxology added later to the Lord's Prayer. The verse as it stands reads somewhat abrupt, but it may have stood part of the text from the beginning.

PSALM XV. THE GUESTS IN GOD'S HOUSE.

This Psalm has been called by Cheyne a 'guest-Psalm,' because in common with others it deals with the idea of fitness to dwell in the presence of God, to be one of the guests admitted to His house and allowed to sojourn in His holy abode. It is natural to associate it with Ps. xxiv, but the phrase 'Who shall abide?' is found in prophets of different periods. Note especially Isa. xxxiii. 14, 15, the writer of which may have drawn inspiration from this Psalm. The answer here given to the question is distinctly ethical, and the composition is simple in tone and structure. There is nothing to suggest a late date, unless it be the phrase 'holy hill,' and this does not necessarily imply a late idea.

The question is propounded in verse 1; the answer is given in $2–5^b$; the conclusion in 5^c.

1. The words 'tent' and 'mountain' may refer to the temporary structure for the ark on Mount Zion. The idea of 'God's guest' is still a prevalent one in the East. Robertson Smith refers to the very phrase in Arabic, *jar-Allah*, as given to one who dwells in Mecca by the holy stone.

2. He that walketh, &c. This answer is characteristic of the best spirit of Judaism. They are not all Israel who are of Israel; not all dwellers in Jerusalem, not all priests who frequent the holy place, are true guests of God. Purity of heart and life are alone well-pleasing in His sight.

The guest receives protection as well as hospitality, in this

3 He that slandereth not with his tongue,
Nor doeth evil to his friend,
Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.
4 In whose eyes a reprobate is despised;
But he honoureth them that fear the LORD.
He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.
5 He that putteth not out his money to usury,
Nor taketh reward against the innocent.
He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

---

case Divine protection. Who may claim it? The Psalmist says, only the man of integrity, who is true-hearted as well as veracious. The 'inwardness' of the N. T. is not entirely unknown in the Old.

3. Render, 'He that hath no slander upon his tongue,' and mark a change of tense in the following clauses, indicating state and habit. 'His fellow' is perhaps better than 'his friend'; it is synonymous with **neighbour**, and does not imply personal friendship. The 'taking up reproach' which might otherwise lie harmless, and passing it on to others' discredit, is too common a vice in all times.

4. A man's estimate of others forms a sure criterion of his own character. The **reprobate** represents the worthless dross of society. Such persons may be exalted, xii. 8, but it is characteristic of a degenerate age that they should make their way to the front. The true man will estimate them at their true value, whatever their rank or wealth. To venerate only the venerable, to regulate worth by 'the fear of Jehovah'—what a revolution would be created in any society by the carrying out of such principles!

For the sacredness of a promise solemnly made, see Lev. v. 4. Perhaps better render, 'Though he sweareth to his own hurt, he changeth not.'

5. Render, 'Nor taketh a bribe against the innocent.' Usury and bribery were both forbidden by the law; see Lev. xxv. 36, 37 and Deut. xxvii. 25. A change in the conditions of society has made the taking of interest for the use of money to be not only harmless but beneficial, or even necessary to civilization. The principle, however, of both these clauses abides unchangeable. It is always wrong to take unfair advantage of another's necessity, to 'grind the face' of the poor, or to employ wealth to interfere with the course of justice. The last line, **He . . . shall never be moved**, forms a fitting climax, showing the perfect tranquillity and security of 'a guest of Jehovah.'

Michtam of David. 16

Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. 1
I have said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: 2

PSALM XVI. LIFE IN GOD HERE AND HEREAFTER.

A fine expression of lofty spiritual experience. Partly because of this high spiritual tone, partly because the closing verses seem to express a definite hope of a future life, many modern critics are disposed to account this a decidedly late Psalm, even amongst those which belong to the post-Exilic period. It has been said that it contains distinct traces of Persian influence. A decision on the question of date must depend upon exegesis and upon the view taken of the history of religious thought amongst the Jews. It will not, however, escape notice that kindred expressions to those found towards the end of this Psalm are found also at the close of Pss. xi and xvii.

The main thought unquestionably is that in Jehovah Himself every true servant of His will find his highest good. The idea itself might well be found in a Psalm of David, but the mode in which the Psalmist works it out suggests a later period. The expressions in verses 9–11 do not necessarily imply the expectation of a future life. Primarily they refer to that 'portion' of blessedness which the godly man enjoys here and now in the presence and favour of Jehovah, though they may readily be understood as a venture of faith, the utterance in a prophetic spirit of a belief not shared by the Psalmist's contemporaries. See notes on those verses. The position of the Psalm thus early in the first collection may be explained if a post-Exilic date for its composition be accepted.

The Psalm contains three parts: the happiness of the service of God in its external relations, verses 1–4; its interior blessedness, 5–8; glad and confident expectation of the future, 9–11. For the word 'Michtam,' sometimes understood to mean 'epigrammatic' in style, sometimes 'golden' in quality, but probably a musical title, see Introd. p. 16.

1. Render, 'In thee have I taken refuge,' and therefore to Thee do I look for the safeguarding I need.

2. The translation of R. V., **I have said,** follows the Versions LXX, Vulg., Syr., Jer. 'Thou' (*fem.*) in A. V. refers to the soul.

The latter half of the verse has been variously rendered. P. B. V. reads, 'My goods are nothing unto thee,' and other similar translations suggest that man has no merit Godwards. Thus Tennyson writes,

'For merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O Lord, to Thee:

I have no good beyond thee.
3 As for the saints that are in the earth,
They are the excellent in whom is all my delight.
4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied that exchange *the* LORD
for another *god*:
Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer,
Nor take their names upon my lips.
5 The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my
cup:
Thou maintainest my lot.

But the meaning unquestionably is, as in R. V., **I have no good beyond thee,** and this forms the dominant thought of the Psalm.

3. The language is brief and obscure; possibly the text is corrupt, and many emendations have been suggested. Following R. V. the meaning is: the holy ones in the land are those whom I regard as true nobles or princes, and in their society I find delight. Others join with verse 4, 'To the saints I have said,' &c. One conjectural emendation is, 'To the saints which are in his land Jehovah shows honour'—a smooth and tame reading which sound textual criticism would at once reject as too easy to have given rise to the existing obscurity. For the word **saints,** see detached note, p. 361.

4. Idolatry is more or less ripe, and is said to be marked by 'libations of blood'—a phrase which may either be understood literally, or better, metaphorically, of sacrifices blood-stained, impure, and unacceptable. The prevalence of idolatry does not favour a post-Exilic date.

The use of **names** is significant. The name had a power of its own in Semitic worship: the Psalmist refuses to utter the names of false gods, and Zechariah says 'the names of the idols shall be cut off out of the land' (xiii. 2). Compare the watch-words 'Jesus is Lord!' and 'Jesus is accursed!' in 1 Cor. xii. 3; the distinction between Christian and unbeliever depended upon the use made of the name Jesus.

5, 6. Two figures are employed here. One refers to the allotment of land in the sacred territory of Canaan; the Levites are said to have had no separate portion, because God was their portion, Num. xviii. 20. The other is more briefly touched, the cup of blessing in the Psalmist's hand is filled with happiness because he enjoys God's favour.

The phrase **Thou maintainest** is anomalous. If this meaning

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; 6
Yea, I have a goodly heritage.
I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: 7
Yea, my reins instruct me in the night seasons.
I have set the LORD always before me: 8
Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: 9
My flesh also shall dwell in safety.
For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; 10
Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.

---

be kept, it implies 'Thou keepest safe as a peculiar care'; but Delitzsch renders 'Thou makest broad' or 'spacious,' and Cheyne 'Thou wilt continually be my lot.' The **lines** are the measuring-lines for determining the allotment, put for the portion itself. See a similar usage in Joshua xvii. 5 and in the Greek of 2 Cor. x. 13.

7, 8. Render, 'Yea, mine own reins instruct me.' The reins are the organs of emotion, and in the quiet hours of the night conscience often speaks. The word **instruct** implies a combination of admonition and stimulus.

Jehovah may be conceived of as **before** the Psalmist, then he will walk after Him, in His ways; or at his **right hand**, then he will walk with God, like Enoch. Either way he is secure and strong—**I shall not be moved.**

9-11. This closing strophe, says Delitzsch, 'consists of seven rays of light'; all the parts of man's being are lighted up by the presence of God. Heart, flesh and soul (glory) are all named in verse 9. The phrase **dwell in safety** was a customary one to describe Israel as abiding under the protection of God, and does not in itself necessitate any reference to a future life. The rendering 'dwell in hope' is from the LXX, and is not justified by the Hebrew.

10. thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol can hardly be understood as meaning, 'wilt bring me out of the underworld after I have passed within its grasp.' It is parallel with 'dwell in safety,' and 'not suffer to see' *Shachath*, or 'the pit': i. e. 'Thou wilt preserve me from the grave, which as a monster is ready to devour.' The K'thibh in the Hebrew has 'holy ones,' but this is almost certainly an error. R. V. follows the Q'ri, **holy one**, which should not be spelt 'Holy One' (A. V.), as if it referred to Christ, but must be understood as synonymous with 'godly'

11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life:
In thy presence is fulness of joy;
In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

---

or 'beloved' (R. V. marg.), one united to God by the bond of covenant-love. See detached note on *Chasid*, p. 360.

11. This verse confirms the general ideas suggested by the last. It does not, any more than verse 10, make any definite reference to a life of future blessedness, but it emphasizes the fact that real life is to be found in the presence and service of God. 'Thou wilt make me to know the path of life' refers to the way which the servant of God is to tread here and now; when the Psalmist speaks of **thy presence** he is not thinking of a distant heaven. In the last line he says not 'at thy right hand' (A. V.)—a translation in which a whole fallacy lurks—but, **in thy right hand** are the joys that cannot die. If we rightly interpret these profound words, the question of existence in Sheol or beyond Sheol was not before the mind of the Psalmist at all. A great spiritual truth is expressed in noble words—no more and no less.

Perowne says, 'In this Psalm, and in the next, there shines forth the bright hope of everlasting life. . . . The argument which our Lord used with the Sadducees applies here with special force.' Precisely, but only as our Lord used it. The words 'God of Abraham' do not of themselves declare a doctrine of future blessedness, but they contain implicitly what a fuller spiritual insight makes explicit. He who firmly holds the words of this Psalm to be true will find in them the germ of immortality. The Psalm is quoted by Peter in Acts ii. 25, and by Paul in Acts xiii. 35. On the whole subject of the Messianic use of the Psalms and the Jewish Hope of a Future Life, see Introduction to vol. ii. The bearing of the general considerations there adduced upon the interpretation of the Psalm before us is this. The writer's theme is the blessedness and security of life in God for himself and all who trust and serve God. The safety and joy of that life has no bounds, and the description of it given in the closing verses, while containing no explicit reference to a future life, may appropriately be used with deeper significance by those for whom Christ has 'brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.' So in the original words there is no explicit reference to a coming Messiah and his resurrection; but when he had come and was risen from the dead, the inspired apostles showed how not in David, nor in any psalmist or prophet, did this passage find its complete illustration and fulfilment. And as Christ drew the doctrine of immortality from the phrase 'God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob,' so Peter finds the doctrine of the Resurrection in the words of 'the

A Prayer of David. 17

Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry; 1
Give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.
Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; 2
Let thine eyes look upon equity.
Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; 3

patriarch David,' who died, and was buried, and did not fully realize himself how God would not 'leave His Holy One to see corruption.' Inspired and living words, like those of the Psalmist, have ever their own 'springing and germinant accomplishments.'

PSALM XVII. REFUGE IN GOD FROM THE PATHS OF THE DESTROYER.

The conditions under which this Psalm was written correspond in several particulars with those of David under Saul's persecution. It presents points of similarity with Pss. vii and xi, and several critics assign all three to David. On the other hand, there is nothing specific in the phraseology which would prevent our ascribing it to a persecuted saint during or after the Exile, and the tendency of recent criticism runs in that direction. Distinct historical or objective references such as would settle the question of date are lacking here, as in other Psalms, hence the judgement of critics is usually determined by their views as to the general history of religion in Israel. The present tendency is to consider the religious experience here described as too mature for the Davidic period—a position which has not yet been proved.

The Psalm is a plea to God for the vindication of the writer's cause. The lines of demarcation of thought are not very clear, but the appeal takes on fresh urgency at verses 6 and 13, and the whole prayer may be divided into three parts: the first, a plea based on the Psalmist's conscious integrity, 1-5; the second, an appeal against the virulence of his foes, 6-12; the third presses the broad contrast between the two, 13-15.

1. A piercing **cry,** such as the Eastern does not hesitate to utter, in expressing joy or sorrow. There is a poignancy about the subject-matter of some of the petitions which fully justifies the strong word used.

2. The Psalmist asks only for justice: 'Thine eyes behold with equity' (marg.); declare the right, O Lord, and all will be well.

3. The self-justification of a man with a clear conscience. These assertions of integrity are comparative only, but real and true as far as they go.

The night is the time for (1) wandering imaginations, to which

1. I will not think evil, v. 3
2, I will not speak evil - 3
3, I will not practice evil. - 4 5

Thou hast tried me, and findest nothing;
I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.
4 As for the works of men, by the word of thy lips
I have kept me from the ways of the violent.
5 My steps have held fast to thy paths,
My feet have not slipped.
6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt answer me, O God:
Incline thine ear unto me, *and* hear my speech.
7 Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest
them which put their trust *in thee*
From those that rise up *against them*, by thy right hand.
8 Keep me as the apple of the eye,
Hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

---

the Psalmist has not yielded; (2) good resolves, which he has made; hence also for (3) spiritual testing, through which he has successfully passed. Another rendering is, 'Thou findest no evil purpose; my mouth shall not transgress.' So Hupfeld, Perowne, and Kirkpatrick. Delitzsch reads, 'Thou findest nothing. If I think evil, it shall not pass my mouth.' The former of these two translations, substantially adopted in R. V. marg., is probably the best.

4. The language of this verse suits a person better than a community, and the Davidic rather than the post-Exilic period.

by the word of thy lips might be illustrated from our Lord's use of the written word to repel the assaults of the tempter in the wilderness.

5. A further assertion of innocence, not a prayer as in A. V., 'Hold up my goings,' &c.

The **paths** or 'tracks' are the definite duties marked out by the God of righteousness.

6. I have called means, I am now calling, and claim a hearing on the grounds enumerated.

7. On the word **marvellous** see above on ix. 1. It implies special intervention. Render, with R. V. marg., 'From those that rise up against thy right hand.' This is simpler than R. V., it makes better sense, and is supported by several versions. On the other hand, it is alleged that there is no parallel in the O. T. to this mode of expression, but this is not a very serious objection.

8. The two beautiful and apposite figures of this verse have been made familiar by O. T. usage. The 'pupil' of the eye, called in Hebrew 'little son,' or sometimes 'daughter of the eye,'

From the wicked that spoil me, 9
My deadly enemies, that compass me about.
They are inclosed in their own fat: 10
With their mouth they speak proudly.
They have now compassed us in our steps: 11
They set their eyes to cast *us* down to the earth.
He is like a lion that is greedy of his prey, 12
And as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.
Arise, O LORD, 13
Confront him, cast him down:
Deliver my soul from the wicked by thy sword;
From men, by thy hand, O LORD, 14
From men of the world, whose portion is in *this* life,
And whose belly thou fillest with thy treasure:
They are satisfied with children,
And leave the rest of their substance to their babes.

---

once the 'door of the eye,' Zech. ii. 8, is the centre of the organ of vision, and hence is specially precious and specially protected by Nature. The figure is used to describe the Divine care in Deut. xxxii. 10.

The metaphor of the bird with sheltering pinions is frequently employed elsewhere; see Pss. xxxvi. 7 and xci. 4. It is familiar through Christ's allusion to the hen with her brood; the reference to the eagle in Deut. xxxii. 11 is somewhat different.

9. The phraseology of this verse as well as that of verse 4 is urged as suitable to David's circumstances by those who accept his authorship, but there is nothing particularly distinctive in it.

10–12. Moral obtuseness is described by the figure of the eyes standing out with fat, or the heart being enclosed by fat, see Ps. lxxiii. 7. Many have beset the Psalmist's steps with greedy eagerness; one, however, being prominent in pursuit, is described as a lion, which, when confronted by superior strength or courage, may be compelled to crouch and retire.

13, 14. A. V. and R. V. marg. read, 'Men which are thy hand.' It is true that the wicked are sometimes described as the sword of God; compare Isa. x. 5, 'Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger!' But here such a thought is alien to the context, and mars the simplicity of the sentence.

The wicked have their reward, says the Psalmist. In the last

15 As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness:
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. ||

18 For the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: and he said,

1 I love thee, O LORD, my strength. Fervently do I love Thee

two lines render, 'They are satisfied with sons, and leave their substance to their children.' Abundance of offspring is always a mark of prosperity in the East. See Job xxi. 8, 11; Ps. cxxvii. 3–5.

15. The Psalmist is content to wait for his full reward, and it is of the most spiritual kind. The clauses of this verse may be understood either as confident hopes, **I shall behold,** or as prayers, 'May I behold!' The latter is perhaps better. The prayer of Moses in Exod. xxxiii. 20 is repeated, 'I beseech thee, shew me thy glory,' with expectation of a yet more complete answer.

May I be satisfied . . . with thy likeness, more literally, thy 'form' (R. V. marg.), as in Num. xii. 8, 'the form of Jehovah shall he behold.'

But what is meant by **when I awake?** Commentators suggest: (1) each morning after the night's sleep; (2) after the night of sorrow, or doubt, or anxiety; (3) in a future life. Of the above renderings, (1) is tame and prosaic, and if (3) had been intended we should expect the language to have been more explicit. On the whole, (2) appears to be best supported by the parallels in Pss. xxx. 5, cxxxix. 18, cxliii. 10, and by the paraphrase of the LXX and Targum, 'When thy glory appears.' The words may then be left without closer definition in their suggestive simplicity. The prayer may be unquestionably fulfilled in the present life, as God grants ever clearer manifestations of Himself, and scatters from time to time the heavy gloom or the vain and foolish dreams of the Psalmist's night. But it is impossible for those who read the words in the light of fuller revelation to shut out the thought that after the night of death the believer will awake to the full vision of God in the heavenly morn. Only the Psalmist does not *say* this, he expresses a hope which contains this wonderful blossom in germ only. 'Here,' says Delitzsch, 'we see into the very heart of the O. T. faith.' But faith it remains, all the more wonderful that it had so little food on which to nourish its strength, so little light to guide it on its way.

PSALM XVIII. A ROYAL THANKSGIVING.

If there are any Davidic Psalms in the Psalter, this is one. The language of verse 50 does not prove that the writer claims to be

The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; 2
My God, my strong rock, in him will I trust;

David, nor does it make it certain that another than David was the writer; though both these positions have been taken. But (1) it is directly attributed to David not only in the title, but in 2 Sam. xxii; (2) there is nothing in the subject-matter directly inconsistent with such authorship; (3) the language describing the theophany is distinctly early in character, unless a later writer has deliberately set himself to imitate an earlier style; and (4) it is very difficult to find another suitable period for its composition. The only tenable alternative to Davidic authorship is that the Psalm was composed by a later poet who wove the incidents of David's life into just such a song of thanksgiving as he might have written; and against this is to be set the vigour, earnestness, and intensely personal character of the language used. Even the more extreme opponents of early Psalms are disposed to make an exception in this case, though some would admit only a kind of Davidic basis for a later and more elaborate composition.

The strongest argument on the other side is the assumed impossibility of the early appearance of a Psalm embodying such spiritual truth and experience. Prof. Cheyne, who in an earlier volume inclined to date the Psalm as pre-Hezekian, some time ago withdrew even this measure of concession. He smiles at the idea that a 'versatile *condottiere*, chieftain and king' should have been a prophet in his old age; and puts forward a theory of two Davids, the one a 'hero of the transition from rudeness to culture,' the other—ideal only—a representative of spiritual religion.

As was stated in the Introd., p. 24, we have not the data for arriving at any absolute certainty in this matter, and it is therefore only possible to balance probabilities. As regards external evidence, we have the testimony of 2 Samuel, which contains one admittedly Davidic composition in the first chapter. This is, however, not a religious poem, and ch. xxii is not an integral part of the original narrative. The title in the Psalm appears to have been taken from the history, not vice versa; but the relation between the texts is very difficult to determine. It is supposed by the best critics that they are independent of one another, while that of the Psalter is on the whole the better of the two, as probably having been revised later. It is difficult to extract any trustworthy evidence as to date from the textual discussion. The general tone of the former part of the Psalm is early, whilst it is undeniable that the same cannot be said of verse 22, with its mention of 'judgements' and 'statutes,' or 'the afflicted people' in verse 27, whilst it is contended that the writer must have been familiar with Deuteronomy. The alleged parallels are, however, capable of another explanation.

My shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower.
3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised:
So shall I be saved from mine enemies.
4 The cords of death compassed me,
And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.

Probabilities point therefore on the whole to the Davidic authorship of this Psalm, with the possibility that an early composition of his was edited later and prepared for use in public worship. The period in David's life at which it was written is indicated in the title. Not in his youth, when he was struggling with foes for supremacy or for very existence; nor in the period which was overshadowed by his sin; nor when he was compassed by the infirmities of age. At the time when his victories had been won, when he was anxious to build a house for God and gracious promises had been given him through Nathan that 'the Lord would build him an house,' as recorded in 2 Sam. vii, David may well have poured out his soul in the triumphant thanksgiving of this glorious Psalm.

It may be thus subdivided: introduction, verses 1–3; description of deliverance, 4–19; the grounds of David's fidelity and devotion, 20–30; an outburst of praise in celebration of his triumph, 31–45; conclusion, 46–50.

1. Render, 'Fervently do I love thee, Jehovah, my strength.' A special word is used here for 'love,' and a special form of it, indicating close and tender affection. This preluding invocation has been said to 'touch the high-water mark of O. T. devotion,' and to form 'one of its noblest utterances.' (Maclaren.)

2. Various figures are used to set forth God as a helper. They may be arranged in three pairs. (1) A 'cliff' or cleft rock, *Sela'*, and a **rock**, hard and huge, *Tsur*; (2) a 'stronghold' or entrenchment, *Matsur*; and a **high tower**, or retreat at a precipitous height, *Misgab*; (3) a **horn**, *Keren*, and a 'buckler,' *Magen*. Translate the second line, 'My strong rock, wherein I take refuge.' It will be noticed that most of these words refer to defence rather than aggression, and many of them are just such as would be suggested to David by his wanderings, e. g. in the wilderness of En-gedi.

3. Rather, 'I call, and so am saved,' i. e. whenever I call, God hears and answers. The tense indicates habit, not futurity; or if an element of futurity be admitted, the Psalmist's confidence is better expressed by the use of the frequentative.

4–6 contains a highly figurative and impressive description of David's need. Both this and the account of God's appearance to deliver him are conceived in the characteristic forms of Hebrew poetry, and the phraseology is nowhere to be literally pressed.

The cords of Sheol were round about me: 5
The snares of death came upon me.
In my distress I called upon the LORD, 6
And cried unto my God:
He heard my voice out of his temple,
And my cry before him came into his ears.
Then the earth shook and trembled, 7
The foundations also of the mountains moved
And were shaken, because he was wroth.
There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, 8
And fire out of his mouth devoured:
Coals were kindled by it.
He bowed the heavens also, and came down; 9

The fundamental idea of sore need and wonderful deliverance is to be expressed, and the Psalmist 'generalizes it in a majestic picture.' (Delitzsch.)

4. Render, 'The waves of death . . . and the floods of destruction.' 'Waves' is found in 2 Samuel, 'cords' in verse 5 and cxvi. 3. The word *Belial* (R. V. marg.) refers rather to physical than moral ruin.

5. 'Cords and snares' represent the hunter's arts, dangers of the field, as in the last verse the dangers of the flood were described. 'Prevented' in the A. V. means 'came to meet me.'

6. For the frequentative tense **called**, compare note on verse 3. **temple**, or 'palace,' i. e. heaven.

7–15. A typical description of a theophany, or manifestation of God. Parallels are to be found in the description of Sinai in Exod. xix; in the song of Deborah, Judges v; in the opening of Ps. lxviii, and in Hab. iii. The phenomena of earthquake and thunderstorm are used for the purpose, and the disturbances in nature are understood to be characteristic marks of august power, often of anger, judgement, and punishment of enemies.

8. The phraseology employed here is sometimes called 'mythological.' Anthropomorphic it certainly is, in a marked degree, but in so poetical a passage this is not felt to detract from the dignity of the subject. Metaphor is needful for the bringing home of spiritual truth to the multitude, nor can the few dispense with it entirely. Fire, smoke, hot coals, all indicate with naturalness and force the wrath of the Most High, and such figures are common in most languages, as in the O. T.; compare xcvii. 3.

9. Parallels to the phrases of this verse may be found in Isa.

And thick darkness was under his feet.
10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly:
Yea, he flew swiftly upon the wings of the wind.
11 He made darkness his hiding place, his pavilion round about him;
Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.
12 At the brightness before him his thick clouds passed,
Hailstones and coals of fire.
13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
And the Most High uttered his voice;
Hailstones and coals of fire.
14 And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
Yea, lightnings manifold, and discomfited them.
15 Then the channels of waters appeared,

---

lxiv. 1, where God rends the heavens to come down; Gen. xi. 7, where He descends to punish the builders of Babel; and Exod. xix. 16, where the storm-clouds which cause thick darkness veil His presence before a signal manifestation of Himself and His will.

10. The cherubim are winged creatures possessing symbolic significance which can only be gathered from a comparison of the several passages in which they are mentioned. They stand at the entrance of the garden of Eden, Gen. iii. 24; overshadow the mercy-seat of the ark, Exod. xxv. 18, 1 Kings vi. 23; form a kind of throne for Jehovah, 2 Kings xix. 15; and figure at length in the vision of Ezek. x. They represent in the main the powers of nature in attendance upon the Most High God, or ministering to His majesty. Here the cherub seems to figure as a spirit of the storm. Render the latter clause, 'Yea, he came swooping upon the wings of the wind.'

11. By a bold figure the dark storm-cloud forms a tent from which Jehovah emerges.

12. Render, 'From the brightness before him through his thick clouds there passed hailstones and coals of fire.' Compare Exod. xix. 18.

13. Ps. xxix furnishes a sublime comment upon this description of thunder as the voice of God. The last line, 'Hailstones and coals of fire,' should probably be omitted: so 2 Samuel and the versions.

For the title '*Elyon*, Most High God, see p. 359.

15. Read, 'Then the bed of the sea was seen, and the foundations,'

And the foundations of the world were laid bare,
At thy rebuke, O LORD,
At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
He sent from on high, he took me; 16
He drew me out of many waters.
He delivered me from my strong enemy, 17
And from them that hated me, for they were too mighty for me.
They came upon me in the day of my calamity: 18
But the LORD was my stay.
He brought me forth also into a large place; 19
He delivered me, because he delighted in me.
The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; 20
According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.
For I have kept the ways of the LORD, 21
And have not wickedly departed from my God.
For all his judgements were before me, 22
And I put not away his statutes from me.

&c., phraseology descriptive of what happened at the Red Sea, see Exod. xv. 8. The phenomena are those of earthquake or hurricane.

16. We now reach the object of this display of power—David is delivered, as Luther says, like another Moses from the waters.

17–19. The deliverance is described in very general terms—a proof, according to Wellhausen, of a later hand. It must be recognized however, that here, as throughout the Psalter, it is no part of the object of the Psalmist to enter into details such as the historian expects and delights in. The language is quite adequate for the object intended, and is suitable to the deliverance from Saul—in part to David's victories over his enemies. Either a contemporary or a later writer might have given detailed descriptions had he chosen, see Pss. lxxviii and cvi; but this would have altered the whole style of composition. The **large place** of verse 19 is the usual phrase for deliverance from 'straits.'

20–24. The assertion of innocence in this section is comparative, not absolute; but it is true within well-defined limits. It is more appropriate in David's lips before his fall, or as written by another

23 I was also perfect with him,
And I kept myself from mine iniquity.
24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.
25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful;
With the perfect man thou wilt shew thyself perfect;
26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure;
And with the perverse thou wilt shew thyself froward.
27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people;
But the haughty eyes thou wilt bring down.
28 For thou wilt light my lamp:

---

concerning him, than as descriptive of the post-Exilic community. **Perfect with him,** in verse 23, means that the Psalmist preserved his general integrity in the sight of God, as well as among men. Compare the language of Ps. ci.

24–26. Here are laid down in bold and striking form certain principles of Divine Providence, which are seen to be reasonable as well as in accordance with experience. God's action must depend on man's attitude, else there can be no moral government or meaning in history. Cheyne expresses it differently when he says, 'an impressive statement of the eternal tragedy of history.'

Three words are used on the side of righteousness, **merciful, perfect, pure,** or, as we may say, kindliness, integrity, and holiness. One word only represents unrighteousness—a very suggestive one, **perverse,** or **froward.** If a man is at cross-purposes with righteousness he will find that Providence will, sooner or later, cross him. So in Lev. xxvi. 23, 24, 'If . . . ye will not be reformed unto me, but will walk contrary unto me; then will I also walk contrary unto you; and I will smite you, even I, seven times for your sins.'

27. Render, 'For thou savest the afflicted people,
But haughty eyes thou dost abase.'

28. Here again the tenses are better understood as presents, 'thou lightest my lamp,' and 'dost enlighten my darkness'—a generalization from experience.

In 1 Kings xi. 36 we find the phrase, 'that David my servant may have a lamp alway before me in Jerusalem,' of the continuation of the dynasty; and Job xviii. 6 speaks of the lamp of the wicked as being put out. The parallel passage in 2 Sam. xxii. 29 represents God as Himself being the lamp of His servant.

The LORD my God will lighten my darkness.
For by thee I run upon a troop; 29
And by my God do I leap over a wall.
As for God, his way is perfect: 30
The word of the LORD is tried;
He is a shield unto all them that trust in him.
For who is God, save the LORD? 31
And who is a rock, beside our God?
The God that girdeth me with strength, 32
And maketh my way perfect.
He maketh my feet like hinds' *feet*: 33
And setteth me upon my high places.
He teacheth my hands to war; 34
So that mine arms do bend a bow of brass.
Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: 35
And thy right hand hath holden me up,

---

29. Render, 'I can run upon a troop,' as in the war with the Amalekites in 1 Sam. xxx. 8, 15, 23, and 'by my God I can leap over a wall,' as in attacking the Jebusites, 2 Sam. v. 6-8.

30. Whatever be the views of men, or the variations in man's conduct, God's way is flawless; His words are pure and trustworthy; His defence is sure.

31, 32. A close parallel may be observed with the passage Deut. xxxii. 31 foll., but the Psalmist is as likely to be original as the writer of the song. The word 'Eloah' for God, found four times in the Psalter, is an old word, perhaps specially indicating God as reverenced. God's way is 'perfect' towards the 'perfect' man.

33. He enables me to travel rapidly, yet securely makes my feet swift and yet sure in the most difficult places, like a chamois among the rocks. See Deut. xxxii. 13.

34. Brass, an amalgam of copper and zinc, stands sometimes for copper, as in Deut. viii. 9. Here, and usually, for bronze, a compound of copper and tin. A metal bow, such as is mentioned in Job xx. 24, would be made of bronze.

35. Emphasis is laid here upon the Divine help which enabled David to gain the victories hereinafter described. Else the catalogue of his achievements would sound vainglorious, like the cuneiform inscriptions which in high-flown language set forth the conquests of the Assyrians.

Ps. 113:5-6. Is. 57:15

lowliness

And thy gentleness hath made me great. ||

36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me,
And my feet have not slipped.
37 I will pursue mine enemies, and overtake them:
Neither will I turn again till they are consumed.
38 I will smite them through that they shall not be able to rise:
They shall fall under my feet.
39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle:
Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.
40 Thou hast also made mine enemies turn their backs unto me,
That I might cut off them that hate me.
41 They cried, but there was none to save:
Even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.
42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind:
I did cast them out as the mire of the streets.

In the last clause the word **gentleness** means properly 'lowliness,' a strange word to apply to God, yet one of great beauty and truth. Compare 'He humbleth himself' in cxiii. 5, 6. The translation 'condescension,' R. V. marg., gives the idea, but is too stiff. The LXX timidly paraphrases by a word which means 'kindly discipline,' and this is probably the origin of P. B. V. 'loving correction.'

37. The tenses here and in subsequent verses cause some difficulty. Strange though it may seem to an English reader, they are susceptible of very different meanings. They may indicate a retrospect of the past, as A. V. 'I have pursued'; or a forecast of the future, as R. V. **I will pursue**; or a broad general statement, as in the present 'I pursue.' Commentators are divided as to which shade of meaning predominates. Verse 40 is retrospective, and may carry the others with it; but in verses 37 and 38, 44 and 45 it seems much better to render by the English historical present, 'I pursue, I overtake . . . as soon as they hear, they obey,' &c.

41. 'They cried . . . even unto Jehovah': does this imply that the enemies in question were Israelites? Not necessarily. Prayer

Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; 43
Thou hast made me the head of the nations:
A people whom I have not known shall serve me.
As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me: 44
The strangers shall submit themselves unto me.
The strangers shall fade away, 45
And shall come trembling out of their close places.
The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; 46
And exalted be the God of my salvation:
Even the God that executeth vengeance for me, 47
And subdueth peoples under me.
He rescueth me from mine enemies: 48
Yea, thou liftest me up above them that rise up against me:
Thou deliverest me from the violent man.

---

to a God whom they had proved to be mighty may have been wrung from heathen foes in their despair.

43. 2 Sam. xxii. 44 reads 'my people.' The two passages together remind us that David was engaged in both civil and foreign wars. The uncertainty of the tenses appears here again, see R.V. marg. Some render, 'did serve me'; better in the present, as Driver and others, 'A people whom I have not known serve me'; and so in the next two verses. The clause 'I knew not' means that nations from a distance sent in messages of submission at the very report of David's prowess and conquests.

45. 'They fade . . . they come trembling': their forces dwindle away, and they come from their hiding-places with offers of surrender.

46-50. May be taken as a closing, though somewhat prolonged doxology.

47. The meaning of **vengeance** should be rightly understood. It is said in xciv. 1 to belong to God; 'vengeance is mine,' Rom. xii. 20. But that power of avenging evil which God keeps in His own hands and puts forth in His own time and way has in it no personal vindictiveness; its object is the vindication of righteousness—a very different thing.

48. The change from the plural to the singular—**enemies, violent man**—and vice versa is common in the Psalms. The singular sometimes stands for the class collectively, and the plural does not shut out the thought of an individual prominent in the writer's mind.

49 Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among
the nations,
And will sing praises unto thy name.
50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king;
And sheweth lovingkindness to his anointed,
To David and to his seed, for evermore.

19 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.
1 The heavens declare the glory of God;

---

49. The proclamation of Jehovah **among the nations** has been adduced as evidence of late date, but without sufficient reason. This verse is quoted by Paul in Rom. xv. 9 of the Gentiles as heirs of salvation.

50. The opening phrase of this verse is an excellent rendering of the words which mean literally 'He magnifieth the salvation(s) of his king,' and the mention of the 'king' and of 'David' raises the question whether this verse is an addition of a later poet, or whether David himself thus sums up the whole lessons of his life and the fulfilment of the promises made to him by Nathan in 2 Sam. vii.

It is possible that David wrote the words himself, but the mention of 'David and his seed' reads much more like the addition of an editor preparing a Psalm of David for use in the worship of the congregation.

PSALM XIX. GOD IN HIS WORKS AND IN HIS WORD.

It is clear from the example of Ps. cviii that different Psalms were sometimes combined to form a new whole, and from 1 Chron. xv that portions of Psalms were sometimes so blended together. It is very probable that such a case of combination is before us in Ps. xix, since the style and rhythm and phraseology of verses 1–6 differ considerably from verses 7–11. But if this is so, the union has been most skilfully effected, while verses 12–14, which belong to the latter portion, constitute an appropriate close to the whole.

'Two worlds are ours,' says the Christian poet: this Psalm enables us to understand them both. It shows us how to study intelligently the book of nature which he 'who runs may read,' and also that 'mystic heaven and earth within,' which is 'plain as the sea and sky' only to him who has learned the secret of Jehovah. Most readers of this Psalm will recall the passage of Kant—often incorrectly quoted—'There are two things that fill my soul with holy reverence and ever-growing wonder—the spectacle of

And the firmament sheweth his handywork.
Day unto day uttereth speech, 2

---

the starry sky that virtually annihilates us as physical beings, and the moral law which raises us to infinite dignity as intelligent agents.' But it is only as the dark dome of the soul within is illumined by the light of moral and spiritual truth that the full meaning of the star-lit sky without can be understood. And it is the glory of Israel that she more than any other nation has helped to teach the world this lesson. This Psalm has played no mean part in impressing it upon succeeding generations.

Hence, while we are quite prepared to recognize the distinction between the two parts of the Psalm, marked by the change of names from El, the God of creation, to Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel and God of Grace, these two portions blend admirably together, and each gains in significance by the conjunction. If the latter was written as an appendix to the former, or if a third Psalmist combined the compositions of other two, a certain religious insight or genius is displayed in the union. For the instruction of generations Ps. xix has been, and will remain, beautifully and indissolubly one.

The tone of the latter half of the Psalm, reminding us constantly of Ps. cxix, would suggest a post-Exilic date, whilst the first half might well have been written by David himself. Certain 'Aramaisms,' as they have been called, in verses 3 and 5 have been alleged as objections to this. But the forms may be regarded as poetical, and we are decidedly of opinion, with Ewald, that verses 1-6 form a fragment of an early and noble lyric.

1. The revelation of God in nature is here illustrated from the sky and the sun. Perhaps the original poem contained a fuller description of the splendours of creation, since verse 6 breaks off abruptly. The glory of God in the storm is set forth in Ps. xxix; in Ps. xciii the ocean displays His majesty, while in Ps. civ His marvellous works both in heaven and in earth are described at length.

glory: i. e. manifested excellence. The Psalmist is not troubled by any contrast between 'nature' and nature's God, such as has disturbed the minds of students of physical science in later days. Those who would see in the sky what the Psalmist saw must add to faith knowledge, and to knowledge faith.

firmament, derived from a root meaning 'to stretch,' is, as in Gen. i. 6, the name of the expanse of sky immediately over the earth.

2. Day and night have each a message; when darkness comes, more, not less, is told us of the heavenly orbs. 'If light can thus deceive, wherefore not life?'

And night unto night sheweth knowledge.
3 There is no speech nor language;
Their voice cannot be heard.
4 Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.
In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

The word for **sheweth** is a different one from that used in verse 1, and this should be noted in English. Render:—

'Day unto day poureth forth speech,
And night unto night proclaimeth knowledge.'

3. The three clauses of this verse are impressive in their extreme brevity. Render, 'There is no speech, neither are there words, their voice is not heard.' The familiar rendering of A. V., 'There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard,' is that of LXX and Greek versions, of the Targum and Jerome, of Luther and Calvin, and, in modern times, of Delitzsch. It means that the words of these witnesses are heard in every language and every nation of mankind, and it may be argued for this view that verse 4 is continuous with it in meaning, whereas the translation of R. V. would seem to require an adversative 'but' to begin that verse. But this meaning of 'speech' and 'language' is not in accordance with the Hebrew; the introduction of 'where' in A. V. is uncalled for and arbitrary: while the very independence of the clauses as rendered above, without introductory conjunctions, is striking and forcible.

The meaning of the verse as now translated is admirably brought out by Addison, who describes the 'solemn silence' in which the orbs revolve. His phrase 'no real voice nor sound' must be understood in the proper etymological sense of 'real'—concrete, objective, audible to the outward ears. It is quite consistent with the line that follows, 'Forever singing as they shine,' for that voice is audible only to 'reason's ear.' The music of each celestial orb which, according to Shakespeare, 'in his motion like an angel sings, Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins' is unheard by those whom 'the muddy vesture of decay' doth still close grossly in; but Addison follows the Psalmist in teaching that men may still hear the voice which says, 'The hand that made us is Divine.'

4. World-wide is this message; because so spiritual, therefore universal.

line is to be understood as in xvi. 6; the measuring line which delimitates is put for the region marked out and possessed;

Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, 5
And rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course.
His going forth is from the end of the heaven, 6
And his circuit unto the ends of it:
And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul: 7
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: 8
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: 9
The judgements of the LORD are true, *and* righteous altogether.

---

cf. Jer. xxxi. 39. The 'sound' of P. B. V. follows the LXX and other versions, and is preserved by Paul in Rom. x. 18 to illustrate the universality of the Gospel message. It depends upon another reading of the Hebrew, and gives a good sense.

5. The fine comparisons of this verse belong to the earlier period of Hebrew poetry, and are now in themselves classical. Fresh, joyful, strong and confident in his strength, ready for a great and successful future is the bridegroom-hero who represents the sun. 'Goeth forth from his canopy' is a tempting translation, but the custom of being married under a canopy, *Chuppah*, belongs to later Hebrew usage. For the phrase 'coming out of the bridal chamber' cf. Joel ii. 16.

6. The natural appearances of the sky are obviously followed here. The sun appears to revolve, beginning at one 'end of the heaven,' and his circuit is 'to the ends of it again,' diffusing universal life and blessing. It is difficult to think either that a poem ended with these words, or that a Psalmist passed immediately from them to those which follow.

7-9. The praises of the Law. Rhythm and structure change. A peculiar measure known as the Quiah or Elegiac metre is employed. Even in English it can be seen how each line is divided into two parts, a longer and a shorter, by a caesura, or break. This scheme of verse, says Delitzsch, 'as it were rises higher, draws deeper breaths, rises and falls like the waves of the sea; for the Torah inspires the poet more than does the sun.' It does not follow that the more elaborate structure is the more effective, and yet it has a dignity of its own. In three verses are to be

10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold:
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned:
In keeping of them there is great reward.
12 Who can discern *his* errors?
Clear thou me from hidden *faults*.

---

found six names and twelve encomiums of the law which this Psalmist, like the writer of Ps. cxix, delights to praise in varied strains.

The names are **law,** *Torah*, a general Divine revelation; **testimony,** *Eduth*, that which attests the will of God and hence forms the norm for man; **precepts,** *Pekudim*, distinct directions in details; **commandment,** *Mitzvah*, a statutory deliverance summing up the whole; **fear,** *Yir'ah*, a subjective feeling which is intended to give objective direction, since a man's actions should correspond with his reverence for God; and **judgements,** *Mishpātim*, right decisions constituting in themselves a kind of body of law for guidance.

So with the adjectives and participial clauses which describe the excellence of God's revelation of Himself in His word. This is said to be **perfect, restoring the soul,** i. e. it refreshes as with food and comfort, re-vivifies, not 'brings back from wandering.' It is **sure,** and as 'sound doctrine' may be relied upon to give the guidance of steady principle, **making wise the simple** who are easily led astray. It is **right, rejoicing the heart,** since joy must spring from the consciousness of being in one's right place and travelling in the right road. It is **pure, enlightening the eyes,** for light must be clear and illumining. It is **clean, enduring for ever;** purity abides, immorality is corrupting, corruptible and transient. Finally these manifold declarations of God's will in all their aspects are **true,** and **righteous altogether**—a break in the metre occurring here, which rounds the paragraph off to a close.

10. Other lines of praise lead to a comparison with the preciousness of gold and the sweetness of honey, as in Ps. cxix. Translate with R. V. marg., 'honey and the outpouring of the honeycomb.' The purest honey is the virgin honey which flows freely and naturally from the cells.

11. The true servant of God understands the value of warnings, from which others shrink as interfering with the enjoyment of following their own way. He has discovered wherein lies the reward of obedience.

12. The effect of contemplating law is not immediately pleasant.

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; 13
Let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be perfect,
And I shall be clear from great transgression.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my 14
heart be acceptable in thy sight,
O LORD, my rock, and my redeemer.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. **20**
The LORD answer thee in the day of trouble; 1

It forms a mirror which shows each man his actual self—no lovely sight. The word translated 'errors' indicates those slighter and more venial faults which easily escape notice, but which testify to a roving will. Jeremiah (xvii. 9) brings out the same thought of the subtlety of sin, the self-deception, the unfathomable evil of the human heart. The Psalmist prays that he may not be held guilty in respect of such wanderings of desire.

13. The distinction between sins of ignorance and sins of presumption—literally those which 'boil over' with wantonness and daring—is familiar in the law. See Lev. iv. 1, 13; Num. xv. 22. According to the text of R. V. the Psalmist prays to be preserved from these two kinds of sin—venial and mortal; in more modern phraseology—then he will be perfect indeed.

Many modern interpreters, however, prefer the rendering of R. V. marg., 'from the proud,' i. e. oppressors who, as many Psalms suggest, made life hard for the faithful followers of God's law.

Let them not have dominion may be readily understood of sins which enslave and subjugate, and an excellent N. T. meaning may be deduced from this rendering, but the analogy of other passages favours the marginal reading.

14. The LXX reads, 'alway acceptable,' hence the P. B. V. This closing prayer bespeaks the spirit of a man who has schooled himself by the law of God, who knows how unworthy and sinful man's offerings at best must be, but who has learned also that praise and prayer, silent as well as vocal, form an acceptable sacrifice, when coming from a heart made pure, not so much by the cleansing law, as by the cleansing grace, of God.

PSALM XX. FOR THE KING GOING OUT TO BATTLE.

This and the following Psalm should be read together. The community, by the mouth of a sacred poet, prays for its king, now as he goes forth to battle, now as he returns triumphant. We

The name of the God of Jacob set thee up on high;
2 Send thee help from the sanctuary,
And strengthen thee out of Zion;
3 Remember all thy offerings,
And accept thy burnt sacrifice; [Selah

---

have not sufficient data to enable us to determine what particular king was first intended. It is not to be understood that David wrote these Psalms; but they may have been written in relation to him; their general tone and spirit indicates an early date. Delitzsch follows the Syriac Version in referring this Psalm to David's war against the Ammonites (see 2 Sam. x. 10 and xii. 26), and the Syrians who were allied with them and helped them with horses and chariots (cf. verse 7). Theodore of Mopsuestia refers the Psalm to Hezekiah: Asa and Uzziah have also been suggested. The attempt to refer the Psalm to the Maccabaean period, Simon being the 'king' in question, is surely forced and unnatural. The tone of the Psalm is strongly personal, hence a Messianic application has been given to it. It is, however, suitable in a sense as a prayer for all magistrates and men in high office (Luther), or for that church-kingdom of Christ, of which Israel was the type (Calvin).

The style of this short Psalm is vigorous, and its tone of confidence in God earnest and complete. It might well be arranged for antiphonal singing: in the first part (verses 1–5) the people join in prayer; then a single voice, of priest or Levite, is heard in response (verse 6), and this may, or may not, continue in verses 7 and 8; in modern music these would be sung in quartette, whilst in any case the last verse represents the whole congregation as joining in the chorus of God save the King!

1. The sacred **name** stands for the character of Jehovah as revealed in history.

God of Jacob takes us back to the patriarch's own life, as in Gen. xxxv. 3, 'the God who answered me in the day of my distress'; and xlviii. 15, 'the God who fed me all my life long unto this day'; but also to the history of his descendants who had often cried to God and been heard in the day of trouble.

set thee up on high reminds us that deliverance is sometimes described as being set at large from straits, sometimes as being lifted above the reach of foes.

2, 3. Prayer and sacrifice in the sanctuary are depended upon as giving a sacred character to the warfare and securing the blessing of Jehovah. So Samuel offered sacrifice before the war with the Philistines (1 Sam. vii. 10), and Jeremiah speaks of 'consecrating a war' (vi. 4).

accept literally means 'receive as fat,' the best part of the

Grant thee thy heart's desire,
And fulfil all thy counsel.
We will triumph in thy salvation, 5
And in the name of our God we will set up our banners:
The LORD fulfil all thy petitions.
Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; 6
He will answer him from his holy heaven
With the saving strength of his right hand.
Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: 7
But we will make mention of the name of the LORD our God.

---

animal being consumed as an offering to God. Whether this be a mere pagan superstition, or a pious act of devotion, depends on the motives and the end of the warfare.

Selah perhaps indicates an interval during which music sounded and a part of the sacrificial service was conducted.

4. The end aimed at is not personal aggrandizement, hence the means adopted, the counsel, or plan of campaign, may be directed by God.

5. Render, 'That we may,' or 'So will we shout for joy,' over the deliverance we expect. The prayer is still continued, and finds its climax in the last clause of this verse.

6. Though there is no Selah, an interval evidently takes place between the last verse and this. **Now** shows that something has happened. The sacrifice is supposed to have been offered and, as sign of the Divine acceptance, has been consumed by the sacred flame. The *Azkarah* or memorial, the part which ascended in the holy fire, reminded the Deity of His suppliant.

saveth is a prophetic perfect. The victory is as if already won. 'A whisper may start an avalanche. The prayer of the people has set Omnipotence in motion.' (Maclaren.)

7. The word 'trust' is not expressed in the Hebrew, and either the verb 'make mention of' may be supplied from the next clause or the ellipsis filled up as in our versions. 'Horses and chariots' were formidable indeed to the Israelites, especially in the early days. They were bidden not to adopt this mode of warfare, as in Deut. xvii. 16 the king is not to 'multiply horses,' but rather to destroy those of the enemy. Compare the conflict with Jabin in Judges v, and with Assyria under Sennacherib.

The name of God is sufficient as the watchword of His people, and to 'make mention of' it implies the rallying of forces in His

8 They are bowed down and fallen:
But we are risen, and stand upright.
9 Save, LORD:
Let the King answer us when we call.

21 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

1 The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD;
And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

---

strength and under His protection. This spirit has often welded ordinary soldiers into 'Ironsides.'

8. They are bowed down, &c. These words are uttered before the battle begins, in anticipation of the assured overthrow of the enemy.

9. Render, 'O Lord, save the king, and answer us when we call.' So LXX and Vulg. and many of the best modern commentators. Delitzsch, as well as A. V. and R. V., follows the Massoretic punctuation, **Let the King,** i. e. God, **answer us,** &c. This recognizes the true kingship of Jehovah, but it is not usual for the Psalmists to speak of Him as 'the King,' as if this were in itself a title of Deity. The refrain of the National Anthem is taken from the Vulgate rendering in this place, *Domine, salvum fac regem*, and it must be understood that in the original use 'save' means 'grant him victory.'

PSALM XXI. THANKSGIVING FOR A ROYAL VICTORY.

A companion Psalm to the preceding, presenting points both of similarity and of contrast. Both Psalms contain prayer for a king, but here petition passes into triumph, and thanksgiving is offered for an apparently recent victory. The Psalm is suited for a coronation, and has been repeatedly used on such occasions, but the allusions in verses 3 and 4 do not imply that it was composed either for a coronation or a royal birthday. A traditional Jewish interpretation makes it a Messianic Psalm; the Targum reads 'King Messiah' in verses 1 and 7. It is clear that the king in the Psalm is closely identified with the cause of God, and is His representative on earth; thus the words lend themselves naturally to a Messianic application, as is seen by the use of the Psalm on Ascension Day. But there is no sufficient reason for thinking that this was originally intended by the Psalmist.

The former part of the Psalm, verses 1–7, is to be sung by the congregation, as an address to God; there follows a strophe, verses 8–12, which forms an address to the king—it may be,

Thou hast given him his heart's desire,
And hast not withholden the request of his lips. [Selah 2
For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: 3
Thou settest a crown of fine gold on his head.
He asked life of thee, thou gavest it him; 4
Even length of days for ever and ever.
His glory is great in thy salvation: 5
Honour and majesty dost thou lay upon him.
For thou makest him most blessed for ever: 6
Thou makest him glad with joy in thy presence.

---

intoned by priest or Levite; while, as in Ps. xx, the Psalm closes with a united chant on the part of the whole congregation.

1, 2. The opening verses contain a special thanksgiving for recent deliverance. In the previous Psalm two things were asked for—that the strength of God should be manifested in the king and his army; and that thus deliverance and safety should come to the people. Now the community rejoices in both.

3. The Psalmist passes on to a more general statement of the gifts of God bestowed upon the king.

Render, 'For thou comest to meet him with the blessings of prosperity.' The word **goodness** is a literal translation, but in English seems to refer to the goodness of God, whereas it indicates the 'good things' (R. V. marg.) which the king had abundantly enjoyed. For 'prevent' see xviii. 5. The reference in the **crown of fine gold** is not to the king's coronation, nor to the recent victory; it must be understood as a general description of the royal dignity, as in verse 5.

4. Long life among the Jews signified the favour of God. This is the more intelligible when we remember how completely their religious thought was concentrated on the present life. The same idea is conveyed in **length of days for ever:** it may be understood either hyperbolically of the king's personal life, or of the long continuance of his dynasty, or both.

5. in thy salvation: i. e. through the victory thou hast wrought out for him.

6. *Lit.* 'makest him blessings.' Abraham in Gen. xii. 2 is to be blessed and made a blessing, and the plural is rightly translated **most blessed.** A proof of the Divine favour is admission to the Divine presence and a glimpse of the Divine face. So in our modern use, 'to countenance.'

7 For the king trusteth in the LORD,
And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he shall not be moved.
8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies:
Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.
9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery furnace in the time of thine anger.
The LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath,
And the fire shall devour them.
10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth,
And their seed from among the children of men.
11 For they intended evil against thee:
They imagined a device, which they are not able to perform.
12 For thou shalt make them turn their back,
Thou shalt make ready with thy bowstrings against the face of them.

---

7. In verses 1–6 **thou** implies an address to God; in 8–12 **thou** refers to the king; this verse forms a transition between the two, both God and the king being spoken of in the third person. The trust is such as was exemplified in the last Psalm.

9. To make the enemy **as a fiery furnace** apparently means, 'as the fuel consumed in the furnace'; see lxxxiii. 14, where 'as the fire that burneth the forest' means, 'as the forest that is burned in the fire.' Render, 'in the time of thy wrathful presence.' The phrase is more appropriately understood of God Himself; if the king is intended, it must be as Divine vicegerent.

10. fruit: i. e. offspring; see cxxvii. 3, 'the fruit of the womb is his reward.'

11. Render:—

> 'Though they intend evil against thee,
> Though they imagine a mischievous device,
> They shall not prevail.'

12. thou shalt make ready, &c., means either, 'make ready (the arrows) upon thy bowstrings,' or, 'aim with thy bowstrings against their face.'

Be thou exalted, O LORD, in thy strength : 13
So will we sing and praise thy power.

For the Chief Musician ; set to Aijeleth hash-Shahar. A Psalm 22
of David.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 1

---

13. The concluding verse is a kind of doxology, to be sung in general chorus. Ps. xx ends with united supplication, and this with united praise.

PSALM XXII. A PASSION PSALM.

Of whom speaketh the Psalmist this? Of himself, or of some other? This is a question that has often been asked, and very various replies have been given. The preliminary question, Who is the Psalmist who speaks? cannot be definitely answered, and even if it could, the more important question of interpretation would remain. Delitzsch ascribes the Psalm to David when in the wilderness of Maon, others attribute it to Hezekiah, others to Jeremiah, whilst some Christian as well as Jewish interpreters attribute it to a sufferer of later days who personifies the exiled and oppressed Jewish nation. Cheyne, for instance, would look to the period of Nehemiah and find in the Psalm a description of 'the ideal Israelite,' the 'flower of Israel,' the genius of the nation 'in word and act, in life and in death, rivalling and surpassing the Israel and Moses of antiquity.' The period of the later Monarchy or that of the Exile is perhaps the most probable period for the composition of the Psalm, but the name of its author can never be known.

Much more important is the inquiry whether the writer was simply recording his own personal experience, or whether he wrote as representative of Israel, or whether in prophetic spirit he anticipated the redeeming work of the suffering Messiah. The use of the opening words made by our Lord upon the cross, and the close coincidence between the phraseology of verses 6–8 and 13–18 and Christ's sufferings before and during the crucifixion, have made this Psalm peculiarly sacred to Christians. Bishop Alexander, in his Bampton Lectures on 'The witness of the Psalms to Christ,' has written very impressively of the Psalm from this point of view, which is that of Cassiodorus—'not so much a prophecy as a history,' written beforehand of the pains through which the Man of Sorrows passed for the world's redemption. It would not, however, be sound or safe interpretation to rest much weight upon certain coincidences, touching and impressive as these are to the mind of the Christian believer.

Why art thou so far from helping me, *and from* the words of my roaring?

The view which is beginning to commend itself to a majority of critics—it is at least that of the present writer—is that actual personal experience is certainly to be found in the Psalm and forms its basis, but that the language in some places so far transcends these limits that it contains both a representative and prophetic significance. The primary illustration of the Psalmist's words is found in his own history, a wider in that of his suffering nation, whilst the full meaning of at least some verses can only be found in an event which lay beyond the writer's ken, but which 'the spirit of Christ that was in him did signify.' A fuller account of what is to be understood by 'Messianic' Psalms will be found in the Introduction to vol. ii of this work.

The Psalm divides naturally into two parts: verses 1–21 describing present sufferings and pleading for deliverance, while verses 22–31 contain a triumphant acknowledgement of Divine intervention and the widespread blessings which are to result from this signal proof of God's grace and the victory of the patient sufferer. More minutely, in the first part are eight strophes of two or three verses each, of which the first two are introductory, five describe the sufferer's woes, and the last, 19–21, contains an earnest prayer. The latter half contains two longer stanzas, 22–26 and 27–31, expressing thankfulness and joyful anticipation.

The most remarkable feature of the Psalm is the extent of the blessing contemplated through the sufferings of God's servant and the link of connexion suggested between the two parts. Not only are the godly in Israel and the whole nation to share in the spiritual benefit, but 'all the families of the nations' and generations yet to come. The connexion between the two parts of the Psalm hardly enables us to say confidently that the glory comes *through* the shame and sorrow, nor is the kind of connexion between the experiences of the individual and the effect upon whole nations made quite plain. But such a connexion there plainly is, though the writer has not dealt with the problem of the suffering of the righteous and the benefit conferred upon mankind as does the author of Job or the later Isaiah. The Psalm is several times quoted in the N. T. Besides the 'Eloi' of Matt. xxvii. 46, John xix. 24 claims the fulfilment in Christ of the words describing the partition of the garments, verse 18. The chief priests use verses 7 and 8 for their wicked taunts; verses 14–16 describe the pains of crucifixion; and Heb. ii. 12 expressly quotes verse 22 as if spoken by Christ of those whom He is not ashamed to call brethren.

The title **Aijeleth hash-Shahar,** 'The hind of the morning-

O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou answerest not ; 2
And in the night season, and am not silent.
But thou art holy, 3
O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
Our fathers trusted in thee : 4
They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
They cried unto thee, and were delivered : 5
They trusted in thee, and were not ashamed.

---

dawn,' is to be understood as the name of a tune, without any of the mystical or symbolical significance which both Jewish and Christian interpreters have from time to time attached to it.

1. A plaintive question of appeal. The Psalmist cannot believe that He who is still 'my God' has in reality forsaken him, yet he is alone, helpless, apparently deserted. The poignancy of the complaint expressed in the original by four words only in each line is but imperfectly rendered in the twenty-four words of the English version. *Eloi* and *sabachthani* in the N.T. are Aramaic words, of which *Eli* and *azabtani* are the corresponding Hebrew. **Roaring** indicates the loud shriek of extreme pain.

2. Render, 'in the night season, but find no rest' (R.V. marg.), i. e. obtain no answer. This rendering preserves the parallelism, and is less tame than R.V. **and am not silent.**

3–5. The second strophe begins here, and contains the ground of the appeal made to God, as One who might be expected to hear and answer the sufferer. Render :—

> 'And yet—thou art holy,
> Thou that art enthroned on the praises of Israel.'

The bold and beautiful figure of the latter clause contains a spiritual adaptation of the phrase 'sitteth between the cherubim,' 1 Sam. iv. 4. **Praises** is understood by Perowne to mean the many acts of deliverance and redemption which had called forth praise, but a simpler and better explanation finds in the word those bright clouds of thanksgiving offered by His people, above which God sits enthroned ; just as elsewhere their prayers are represented as clouds of incense rising in His presence.

The meaning of the appeal of course is, that the very righteousness and purity, the faithfulness and truth of the Divine character, as shown by those manifestations to Israel which have called forth repeated praises, constitutes a reason for this expostulation on the part of the righteous sufferer.

In verses 4 and 5 emphasize 'thee' throughout : 'In thee did

6 But I am a worm, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised of the people.
7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,
8 Commit *thyself* unto the LORD; let him deliver him:
Let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him.
9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb:
Thou didst make me trust *when I was* upon my mother's breasts.
10 I was cast upon thee from the womb:
Thou art my God from my mother's belly.
11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near;
For there is none to help.

---

our fathers trust: unto thee did they cry.' They found deliverance, whereas the Psalmist trusts and cries, but no help comes.

6–8. worm represents an object of contempt, one who is helpless to resent or resist. It is used in Isa. xli. 14; and the phrase **no man** recalls the strong expressions of Isa. lii. 14. The scorn of enemies here takes its worst form, that of sneering at the sufferer's piety and trust in a God who seems to care nothing for him.

The perfect tense given in R. V. marg. of verse 8, 'He trusted in God,' is adopted in the N. T., Matt. xxvii. 43, and in the versions. But R. V. is correct, and this rendering makes the taunt still more bitter, *lit.* 'Roll it on Jehovah!' Kirkpatrick compares Wisd. of Sol. ii. 16–20, where despitefulness, torture, and a shameful death are to be inflicted upon the righteous man, to see if he is indeed God's son and if God will uphold and deliver him from his adversaries. The experience has been repeated from the time of Joseph onwards, but the passage referred to forms one of the most striking parallels to this Psalm.

9–11. Render, 'Yea, but thou art he who.' The Psalmist takes the taunt out of the lips of his adversaries, and pleads that as God has delighted in him and shown him mercy from infancy onwards, He should not forsake him now. In verse 10 translate:—

'Upon thee was I cast from my birth:
From my mother's womb thou art my God.'

Hence with confidence the Psalmist can plead, Be not far when trouble is near; thou art near, show thyself, O my God!

Many bulls have compassed me: 12
Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.
They gape upon me with their mouth, 13
As a ravening and a roaring lion.
I am poured out like water, 14
And all my bones are out of joint:
My heart is like wax;
It is melted in the midst of my bowels.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd; 15
And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;
And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
For dogs have compassed me: 16
The assembly of evil-doers have inclosed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet.

12, 13. Brute strength, insolence, irritability are represented by the figure of the wild bulls, who gather and stare and bellow, and are ready to gore their victim. Bashan was famous for its oak forests, rich pastures, and breeds of cattle. See Amos iv. 1. The bulls become lions in the last clause.

14, 15. Contrast the weakness and helplessness of the sufferer who is now at the last gasp. The physical effects of his trouble are graphically described. He is worn to a skeleton, his vital strength is relaxed, dissolved; he is in constant pain and his whole body parched with fever. Render in the last line, 'Thou art laying me in the dust of death.' For the Jew could never think of anything as happening without God.

16-18. He passes back again from himself to his foes. They are like a pack of savage dogs, such as scour all oriental cities—more like wolves than the dogs we know and cherish—a surly, snarling, scavenger tribe, who devour where they can and worry all that are helpless enough to be their prey.

Such are the evil-doers who gather round him. In the latter clause of verse 16 the present Hebrew text reads, 'Like a lion,' which, as it is, cannot stand. The Revisers' marginal note explains that their text follows the versions in rendering, **They pierced.** The Targum combines the two in its paraphrase, 'Biting like a lion.' In verse 17 render, 'I can number all my bones, while these—they gaze and stare upon me.' The words that follow, concerning the parting of the garments, are proverbial of brigands who seize and spoil a traveller, stripping him often to the skin

17 I may tell all my bones;
They look and stare upon me:
18 They part my garments among them,
And upon my vesture do they cast lots.
19 But be not thou far off, O LORD:
O thou my succour, haste thee to help me.
20 Deliver my soul from the sword;
My darling from the power of the dog.
21 Save me from the lion's mouth;
Yea, from the horns of the wild-oxen thou hast answered me.
22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren:
In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

and roughly dividing his property amongst them. They are not to be understood literally in the Psalmist's case, any more than other expressions in this highly-wrought description. The quotation in John xix. 24 is most appropriate and touching, even if the 'fulfilment' of prophecy be not very literally pressed.

19–21. be not thou far off: repeated from verse 11; nothing matters, if *thou* be near. The phrase **my darling,** *lit.* 'my only one,' is to be understood as synonymous with 'my soul' in the parallel clause. Nothing is so precious as life, for which a man will give all he has, Job ii. 4; compare our own phrase, 'dear life.'

Some printing device is almost necessary to bring out the full force of the last word in verse 21. **From the horns of the wild-oxen thou——hast answered me!** For this is the one thing which through the previous long and agonizing description has been wanting, and the word flashes forth with the brilliance and the unexpectedness of lightning. He who has been so long silent has spoken at last!

22. This is the single note of preparation given for an otherwise most abrupt transition from the depths of despair to the summit of joy. We have already noted, however, somewhat similar changes in Pss. vi. 2 and xx. 7, and they are not infrequent in the Psalter.

This verse gives the Psalmist's response to God's manifestation of Himself in mercy. He will publicly acknowledge his great Deliverer, and far and wide shall the effect of this salvation be heard and felt. The personal element is marked here; this verse could not be understood of a community. The quotation of the verse in Heb. ii. 12 shows that the writer of the epistle and his

Ye that fear the LORD, praise him;
All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him;
And stand in awe of him, all ye the seed of Israel.
For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Neither hath he hid his face from him;
But when he cried unto him, he heard.
Of thee cometh my praise in the great congregation:
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
The meek shall eat and be satisfied:
They shall praise the LORD that seek after him:
Let your heart live for ever.

readers were quite prepared to find in the words of the Psalm the experiences of a greater than David or of any sufferer under the old covenant.

23. Here begins a description of the effect which will be produced. The Psalmist begins with the inner circle of the truly pious in Israel, passing on to the nation at large, then to other nations, then to generations yet to come.

24. The tendency of primitive human nature is to despise and neglect the suffering, or even to regard their affliction as a mark of Divine anger. This is shown in Job and Isaiah and elsewhere in the O. T. This Psalm gives another view of pain, and God's pity towards the righteous sufferer, though the writer has not worked out, perhaps had not thought out, his own suggestion. God's pity is beyond man's, and it is His will to bring good out of evil.

25. Of here is ambiguous: render, 'From thee cometh my praise.' The statement of A. V., 'my praise shall be of thee,' is true in itself, but it is not the thought of this verse, which represents God as the source, as He is assuredly the end, of praise.

The phraseology of this and other verses seems to imply that the temple is standing and its services are being carried on.

26. A sacred meal, such as was usual in connexion with the offering of certain sacrifices, e. g. the peace offerings in Lev. vii. 15, 16. The eating in this case is not for the satisfaction of bodily hunger, nor is it a mere piece of ceremonial, but a solemn eucharistic meal in which especially the 'humble' or 'meek' should join. It implies a happy gathering of the faithful ones, Abdiels constant, but not solitary in their constancy, under the weight of severe

27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto
the LORD:
And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before
thee.
28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S:
And he is the ruler over the nations.
29 All the fat ones of the earth shall eat and worship:
All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him,
Even he that cannot keep his soul alive.
30 A seed shall serve him;
It shall be told of the Lord unto the *next* generation.

---

oppression. Those who have been hungry are refreshed; those who have been seeking find; those who have wellnigh fainted revive, and their 'hearts live for ever.'

The same thought of a meal after a sacrifice is preserved in the Christian Communion Service.

27. The circle widens, the nations are gathered in. These are said to remember and turn to the Lord; **remember** is not to be understood literally, though as Paul shows in Rom. i, the nations had a knowledge of God, but lost it through forgetfulness. Here the word may be understood more generally, in the sense of 'take heed.' The Psalmist sees in anticipation the promise made to Abraham (Gen. xii. 3) fulfilled.

28. It is God's right to rule, but the rebellious need to be reconciled and subdued. The remarkable feature of the Psalm is that it gives a passing glimpse of the way in which this is to be brought about through a righteous Sufferer.

29. As 'meekness' is a moral quality associated with poverty, so with the 'fatness' of prosperity there is constantly associated in the Psalms a character of pride and arrogance. This verse describes prophetically the homage to be paid to Jehovah by the haughty oppressor.

The latter part of the verse, **Even he that cannot keep his soul alive,** is difficult. Some think it refers to the poor and needy, who, as well as the rich and prosperous, are to join in worship. But the latter two lines of this verse may emphasize the thought of Ps. xlix, that even the wealthy and strong must 'go down to the dust' and 'cannot keep their souls alive,' and must bow in submission to God. The LXX and some modern interpreters join the last clause of this verse with the next.

30. The **seed** mentioned here refers to the generation then

They shall come and shall declare his righteousness 31
Unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done it.

A Psalm of David. 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 1

---

living, the latter clause of this verse to the next following, while the last verse points to others yet to come.

31. that he hath done it: a statement impressive in its very vagueness. Done what? The deliverance of this sufferer, however notable and significant, is only an indication of a greater work which is not specified, a Divine purpose of salvation only hinted at. The new song which will be sung by coming generations cannot as yet be conceived, as the Divine work of bringing glory through suffering and accomplishing salvation through pain and sorrow is seen but dimly by the light of this Psalm. Yet it sheds a light of its own, and, as Prof. Kirkpatrick says, 'It is a parable of the history of the individual, of Israel, of the Church, of the world.'

PSALM XXIII. THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

The charm of this Psalm of Psalms lies in its combined simplicity of diction, beauty of conception, and wealth of religious significance. These are blended with an art that is beyond art, attainable only by the trustful human spirit guided by the Divine. The chief figure in the picture, that of the shepherd, is one which appeals to all ages and all nations, though it suggests itself most naturally to dwellers in the pastoral countries of the East. The secondary metaphor in verse 5, that of the host at the banquet of life, must not be slighted, though it is inevitably thrown into the background by the superior beauty and suggestiveness of the primary thought. The meaning and helpfulness of this perfect little Psalm can never be exhausted so long as men, like sheep, wander and need guidance, and so long as they learn to find it in God their Shepherd.

The Psalm is inseparably associated with the name of David, whose early experiences may well have given rise in later life to thoughts such as these. But no youth could write it, and many modern commentators refuse to believe that it belongs to the youth of a nation. A long experience lies behind it, of need and trouble, as well as of comfort and help. The fashion prevailing in some quarters of understanding the 'I' of this Psalm as the community of Israel robs it of a large portion of its meaning, though the idea of Jehovah as Shepherd of Israel obtains in the Asaphic Psalms—compare lxxx. 1 and lxxvii. 20—and in certain passages of the prophets. But the tenderly personal note must not be lost from the music of this Psalm, whilst the flock of the

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
3 He restoreth my soul:
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Church in all ages may gain from it their own meed of encouragement and comfort. The use of the Psalm by the saints of all generations, and the almost innumerable metrical renderings and paraphrases it has received in various languages, need only be mentioned to show its value.

1. In the O. T. the shepherd is essentially the ruler. David is appointed to 'feed' God's people, 2 Sam. vii. 7, and a greater David in Ezek. xxxiv. 23 is a shepherd also. Whilst the tenderness of the figure suggested by the close personal care of the shepherd over his sheep is not to be forgotten, the wisdom and strength and authority of the true Leader of men is its prominent element. So when Christ claimed to be the Good Shepherd, whilst declaring his readiness to lay down his life for the sheep, he laid stress upon his authority.

Only when Jehovah is their Shepherd can men dream of saying, **I shall not want.** The P. B. V., 'Therefore can I lack nothing,' reminds of the promise concerning Canaan in Deut. viii. 9, which Moses claims to have been fulfilled even in the wilderness, 'Thou hast lacked nothing,' Deut. ii. 7.

2. The Psalmist follows the flock through varied scenes. In the heat of the day they rest in cool green meadows—'where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon,' Canticles i. 7—by the watercourses which nourish the grass, and near which are the natural resting-places for man and beast. Render, 'And by the still waters he doth guide me.' *Menuchah*, a resting-place, was what Israel sought in the wilderness, and was to find in the Promised Land. They sought it for many a long day after entering Canaan, but Joshua did not give it to them, and when Ps. xcv was written they had not found it. This Psalmist, however, with all who believe, had 'entered into rest.'

3. He restoreth, not brings back as a wanderer from the right path, but revives the weary and fainting who need refreshment. Compare xix. 7.

The phrase **paths of righteousness** does not mean 'straight paths,' but retains its moral meaning. The natural and the spiritual, the symbol and the thing symbolized, are blended in the Psalm, as usually in Hebrew poetry. **For his name's sake** God does many things; that He may be true to His own character, and because He cannot deny Himself. He guards and helps His people for

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me:
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

their own sakes; but they have a stronger security to rely upon than anything earthly can give, in God's fidelity to His own immutable nature and purpose.

4. The word *tsalmaveth*, translated **valley of the shadow of death**, is only in appearance derived from the word 'death'; etymologically it means no more than R. V. marg. 'deep gloom.' The familiar rendering, however, is not only picturesque, but has interwoven itself into our language; none the less it is somewhat to be regretted that the narrower meaning which associates the gloomy and dangerous ravine with death should exclusively prevail, and it would be well to keep as an alternative translation, 'the valley of the dark shadow.'

The **rod and staff** are sometimes regarded as two names for one object, used for different purposes. The more natural meaning of the double phrase is, however, the more correct. The shepherd carries both a *shēbet*, a kind of club or mace slung by the side and used as an offensive weapon when needed, and a *mish'eneth*, a long straight pole carried in the hand and used for climbing, for support, and for helping the sheep in various ways. Render:—

'Thy rod and thy staff—they will comfort me!'

5. Much is gained, even from the point of view of art, by this additional figure to describe God's goodness and man's ground of trust and confidence. Provision for needs, festive rejoicing, the bestowment of dignity, abounding grace more than sufficient for all contingencies—such are the suggestions of this verse, in which the Psalmist is a guest at the banquet of life, with Jehovah for a bountiful Host. Fresh and fragrant oil, freely used in the East as a cosmetic, is associated always with festal occasions, and the neglect to provide it is somewhat of a slight on the part of a host who is entertaining guests, see Luke vii. 46. The last clause runs literally, 'My cup—abundance!'

Enemies lurk in the background. As the sheep will have sooner or later to pass through the dark and perilous glen, so the guest at the feast sees dimly visible beyond the lamps and the silver

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days
of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

24 A Psalm of David.

1 The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.

---

cups faces of foes full of hatred and threatening of aspect. But he fears them not. In the world, tribulation: in Me, peace.

6. The last verse shows how assured is the confidence of one of the guests in God's house. The opening word is sometimes affirmative, as in R.V. text **Surely**, sometimes restrictive, as in marg. 'Only.' It might be paraphrased, 'This one thing remains true, that' **goodness**—that is, the provision of all good things needed, and **mercy**—that is, the bestowal of far more than is deserved, are to be two guardian angels all through the Psalmist's life, inasmuch as all his course will only be a dwelling in one or other of the many mansions of the Great King. There is no direct allusion to a future life in the words **for ever**, neither is there any exclusion of the thought. Those who have learned the lessons of the N. T. are assured that all who are under the guidance of the Good Shepherd and in the care of the Divine Host now will be His 'for length of days' (R.V. marg.), when days and nights are known no more.

PSALM XXIV. THE PALACE OF THE KING OF GLORY.

Shortly after the famous stronghold of Zion had been taken from the Jebusites David brought into that which came to be known as 'the city of David' the Ark of the Covenant which had been resting in the house of Obed-edom. It was an occasion of great rejoicing, partly national, partly religious. 1 Chron. xv gives an account of the event as it loomed in the eyes of later generations across the gulf of many centuries: this Psalm was in all probability composed for the solemn and glorious occasion. It is worthy of even such high use. Its tone throughout is stately and majestic, while its poetical fire, its high ethical standard, and its concentrated force in celebrating the glory of the only abiding King, combine to distinguish it as one of the noblest of the Psalms.

It has been described as one, and one it is in its present form, whatever its history. It is not surprising, however, that in an age of analysis the two parts of which it obviously consists should be regarded as originally separate compositions. Verses 7–10 are viewed by many as the whole or a fragment of an ancient hymn,

For he hath founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the floods.
Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD?
3

to which some later writer has given a not inappropriate setting. It may be so. The transition from verse 6 to 7 is certainly abrupt, and it marks a change of metre as well as of style. Hence, as in xix, two pens may have been at work. On the other hand, abrupt transitions are not infrequent in the Psalter, and the mark of a later age is not impressed on verses 1-6 as on xix. 7-14. But Delitzsch is much better assured of the unity of Ps. xix than of this. Interpreters are naturally divided upon a point in deciding which subjective considerations so largely prevail.

The Psalm gains every way if it be read as it would be antiphonally rendered by a choir. See Stanley, *Jewish Church*, ii. 72. Verses 1 and 2 would form a chorus sung by the procession as it was winding up the hill towards the gates of the ancient fortress. One voice, or group of voices, asks the question in verse 3, answered by others in 4 and 5, whilst all join together in chanting verse 6. As the throng gathers at the entrance of the citadel, some of the priests and Levites have entered to take possession in the name of the Lord. A single voice, or one part of the choir, sounds out the summons of verse 7: 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and the King of glory shall come in,' while the warders from within challenge in return, 'Who is the King of glory?' A triumphant answer echoes back from the multitude outside, 'Yahweh Sabaoth, He is King of glory.' Again the summons, the challenge, and the overmastering shout in reply; then the venerable portal is entered, and the city henceforth is hallowed as the dwelling-place of the great King.

The Psalm is used in the Greek Church at the festival attending a church dedication, and in the Church of England on Ascension Day.

1, 2. The sovereignty of the whole earth belongs to Him who made it. The Hebrew emphasizes not 'earth' and 'world,' but Jehovah. Render therefore, 'Jehovah's is the earth and the fulness thereof . . . For it is He who hath founded it,' &c. The word translated 'world' means the habitable earth, with special reference to human life: 'fulness' means all that fills it, as P.B.V. 'all that therein is' **he hath founded it upon the seas,** &c. To whom should it belong but to its Creator? The idea of the world resting upon the waters is poetical in form, but it fairly represents popular Hebrew ideas, see Gen. i. 6, vii. 11; Ps. cxxxvi. 6, and the well-known phrase of the second commandment, 'the water under the earth.'

3, 4. Who shall ascend, &c. These questions have already been

And who shall stand in his holy place?
4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,
And hath not sworn deceitfully.
5 He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
6 This is the generation of them that seek after him,
That seek thy face, O *God of* Jacob. [Selah

asked in Ps. xv, but they are closely connected here with the context, both before and after. The God of the whole earth may not be lightly approached, yet entrance is shortly to be sought into that holy dwelling-place of His, symbolized by the establishing of the sacred ark upon Mount Zion. Most appropriately therefore is again the question asked, Who may be a guest of the Most High God?

The answer is in substance the same as that given in Ps. xv, and reaffirms the high ethical character of the Jewish religion. But the phraseology here is somewhat more general and more spiritual than in the earlier Psalm; character and actions alike are to be pure in both cases, but the stress lies in the earlier Psalm upon acts, as here upon character.

Four clauses describe the needful characteristics: the first, **He that hath clean hands,** refers to actions, chiefly of violence and dishonesty; the last, to words of fraud and perjury. The two middle phrases refer to inward purity, to desires and motives such as the outward law cannot touch. To 'lift up the soul unto vanity,' means to allow the affections to go forth to that which is empty, useless, transitory and therefore evil, as compared with devotion to the Eternal and Most Holy God. Some find a reference here to idolatry: doubtless the actual worship of idols was a glaring instance of what is here condemned, but the comprehensive description of this clause includes more than overt apostasy from Jehovah.

5, 6. Righteousness is both a condition and result of blessing. A man must cleanse himself so far as in him lies before God will receive him: then the blessing bestowed consists mainly in the power given to attain a deeper and more abiding purity. It is natural to compare the fourth beatitude: those who hunger for righteousness are satisfied with its fullness.

Render, 'Such is the generation,' &c., the idiomatic rendering of the Hebrew **This.** These words recall the sixth beatitude: as those who love purity shall see God, so those who desire to see the face of God shall be cleansed indeed. There is no very

Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; 7
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors :
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is the King of glory ? 8
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; 9
Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors :
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory ? 10
The LORD of hosts,
He is the King of glory. [Selah

---

marked distinction between the synonyms *darash*, **seek after**, and *biqqesh*, **seek**: though the latter implies rather the inquiry of one who does not know, and the former the pursuit of one who knows and desires to attain.

In the last clause of verse 6, A.V. follows the Hebrew, 'O Jacob'; but the meaning of the received text must be, 'These are they who seek thy face, even Jacob,' i.e. these are the true Israel. This is very unsatisfactory, and R.V. is unquestionably right in reading with the chief versions, 'O God of Jacob.'

7, 8. A bold apostrophe. The hoary gates of the old heathen fortress are represented as unwilling to receive the conquering Lord, or the highest of them is too low for His standard to pass under. They are to bow themselves down, or lift themselves up, to make themselves higher and wider—in every way to make room for Him who comes to reign in Jerusalem. Render, with R.V. marg., 'Ye ancient doors,' *lit.* 'gates of old,' whose history stretches into the past, far and dim; the word **everlasting**, though used in permissible hyperbole, carries with it other associations.

King of glory: i.e. the king who is glorious, who does glorious things and who rules over a glorious kingdom.

The warders at the gates ask for the credentials of those who boldly throw down this challenge. What is the name, what the claim to authority of him who seeks to enter? The answer first given is that Yahweh, who is a 'mighty hero,' has already proved His strength in granting victory to His servant David and has come to claim His own.

9, 10. These verses repeat the former colloquy, with one marked variation. The name *Yahweh Tsebaoth*, **LORD of hosts,**

25 *A Psalm* of David.

1 Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.
2 O my God, in thee have I trusted,

---

meets us here for the first time. The subject of the names of God is briefly discussed in a detached note, p. 358, and more fully in the Introd. to vol. ii of this work. Here it may be said that the connotation of this high title varies somewhat with the context, the emphasis lying sometimes upon God's power on earth, sometimes on His majesty as Ruler of the hosts of heaven. The fuller and probably the original form is Yahweh, God of Hosts, but whether angels or stars or armies of men be more particularly thought of, this name of God designates Him as All-Sovereign, Ruler of created being. Hence the Greek translation, Ruler of all; compare the opening phrase of the Apostles' Creed, 'God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.'

There is therefore a distinct addition made in this verse to the claims of the Conqueror who is about to enter—symbolically, through the presence of the ark—into that stronghold of Zion, which is henceforth to be known not as the city of David, but as the city of the great King. 'This is my resting place for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it' (Ps. cxxxii. 14).

PSALM XXV. AN ALPHABET OF DEVOUT PRAYERS.

This Psalm is an acrostic, somewhat irregularly constructed. The rule that each verse of two lines should begin with a letter of the alphabet is broken at the second verse—though this could easily be remedied by a slight rearrangement of words—also at the *Vav* verse, where again a slight reconstruction could easily be made. The letter *Qoph* is wanting to verse 18 where it would be expected, and two succeeding verses begin with *Resh*, while an additional verse beginning with *Pe* is found at the end, after the scheme is complete. It is curious, in comparing the alphabetical Psalms, to find the same dropping of *Vav* in Ps. xxxiv, a somewhat similar confusion in the case of *Qoph* and *Resh* in Pss. ix, x and xxxvii, and a similarly appended *Pe* verse in Ps. xxxiv. Attempts have been made to explain these irregularities. Dr. King thinks that in the earlier of the alphabetical Psalms the order of the letters was not altogether fixed as we have it now, while the appended verses in this Psalm and Ps. xxxiv have been viewed as liturgical additions, giving a hint of the author's name, Pedaliah, beginning with the superfluous letter! It is clearly established that xxv and xxxiv are companion Psalms, probably by the same author. Further than this it is impossible to go at present. The conjectures that are being made on this subject as tentative

Let me not be ashamed;
Let not mine enemies triumph over me.
Yea, none that wait on thee shall be ashamed: 3

---

hypotheses may lead to some assured result, but as yet they have not done so.

In substance, the Psalm is meditative, humble, prayerful. Praise predominates in its companion, Ps. xxxiv. No distinct order of thought can be traced out, nor can this be expected in an acrostic, though some think that the Psalm begins (1–7) with prayer and ends with it (15–21), while meditation predominates between (8–14). Dr. King considers that the Psalm was originally written in two halves, like the acrostic in Pss. cxi and cxii, on a scale of ten letters, the number of the Covenant, and that in this Psalm the former half refers directly to God, the latter deals with the duty of man to man. But these attempts, while interesting in themselves, tend, like those of the Hebrew metrists, to over-systematization.

There is nothing definite in the Psalm to indicate date. If the last verse be not a liturgical addition, it points to the period of the Exile. The Psalm can hardly be earlier than the time of the later Monarchy, and we shall probably not be far wrong if, with Ewald, we find in it the reflections and pleadings of an exile in Babylon who has already partly learned the lessons God was teaching His people, of resignation and trust.

1. The best security against 'lifting up the soul to vanity' (xxiv. 4) is to raise it perpetually Godward in aspiration and prayer.

'It is to Thee, Jehovah, that I lift my soul.'

This opening key-note of the Psalm is well preserved throughout. Whether the Psalmist is praying or pondering, he is setting his affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

The first verse is short of a line, according to the scheme of composition, and it has been proposed to relieve verse 5 of a redundant line, and remove—with some MSS. of the LXX—the exclamation 'O my God' from the second verse, where it disturbs the alphabetic regularity. The latter half of this verse would then read—

'For Thee, O my God, do I wait all the day.'

2. This verse would open with the letter *Beth*, **in thee have I trusted,** &c. The enemies in this case have the upper hand, and the danger is lest the pious and lawful hopes of the truly devout should be overthrown and the godly as such be put to shame. Against this the Psalmist prays.

3. Here he reassures his own soul. It cannot be that he and those who with him wait on Jehovah should be disappointed and

They shall be ashamed that deal treacherously without cause.

4 Shew me thy ways, O LORD;
Teach me thy paths.
5 Guide me in thy truth, and teach me;
For thou art the God of my salvation;
On thee do I wait all the day.
6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses;
For they have been ever of old.
7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:
According to thy lovingkindness remember thou me,
For thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

---

overthrown. For it is not a personal question, the sore trouble with him is in relation to those who **deal treacherously,** who are traitors to God and faithless to their fellow men, and who act thus **without cause,** lightly and wantonly disregarding the most sacred ties—it is these who shall surely incur the confusion they would fain inflict on others.

4. Shew me thy ways, &c. The Psalmist now illustrates what is meant by waiting on God and lifting the soul to Him. He asks that he may know more fully and walk more steadily in God's ways—i. e. understand the Divine meaning and purposes in the events of his own life and those happening around him, so that he may order his own conduct accordingly.

5. Guide me in thy truth seems to anticipate the promises concerning the Holy Spirit (John xvi. 13; compare xvii. 17); but the emphasis in the O. T. lies upon conduct rather than knowledge, and the Psalmist's appeal is rather that God, in the exercise of that 'faithfulness and truth' which belongs to Him, would give the practical guidance which is needed in difficulty. This is borne out by the parallel phrase, **God of my salvation.**

If the last line of this verse is not transferred to complete verse 1, we may suppose that a clause has been lost from the text which would furnish a *Vav* verse in its own place.

6. The appeal to past history is common in the Psalms and prophets, especially about the time of the Exile in Babylon.

7. If the time and circumstances of composition be as suggested, the Psalmist will throughout be thinking of the community as

Good and upright is the LORD: 8
Therefore will he instruct sinners in the way.
The meek will he guide in judgement: 9
And the meek will he teach his way.
All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth 10
Unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
For thy name's sake, O LORD, 11
Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.
What man is he that feareth the LORD? 12
Him shall he instruct in the way that he shall choose.

---

well as of himself: this is shown by verse 22. Hence this confession of sin is more than personal. The tenderness and contrition of spirit, which make this reference to the **sins of my youth** very touching, includes a sense of national frailty and error such as at one time Israel was far from showing.

8-10. 'Mercy and goodness' are the attributes on which the sinner relies for pardon, as in the last verse; here goodness is joined with uprightness, as it is remembered that the offender needs instruction and discipline, that he may reform and walk in the right way. But only **the meek**—those who have learned the lessons of affliction and are humbly willing to learn—can be so taught and guided. **Judgement** means the principle of right carried out in practice. It is characteristic of God, but may be learned by man in his measure. The close connexion between God's ways and man's effort is brought out in the tenth verse. If man will faithfully keep His covenant, he will find that the events of life are ordered for him in mercy and truth, or kindness and fidelity.

11. A further confession, probably to be viewed as national. The greatness of the iniquity makes the sinner to feel more deeply the direness of his need. All sins, even the more venial, need pardon, but some of these, so far from driving a man to God in despair, are hardly felt to be sins at all. None the less, it argues great faith in God for a great sinner to go to Him for forgiveness. The callous offender feels that his repeated transgressions have shut him out from mercy; the contrite and trustful prays, **Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.**

12. in the way that he shall choose: i. e. God will teach the man how to walk in that right way, which through grace he has learned to prefer and make his own. The good man's service of God is perfect freedom, he chooses the path willingly and gladly, but needs instruction. The Psalmist says he shall not lack it.

13 His soul shall dwell at ease;
And his seed shall inherit the land.
14 The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him;
And he will shew them his covenant.
15 Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD;
For he shall pluck my feet out of the net.
16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me;
For I am desolate and afflicted.
17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged:
O bring thou me out of my distresses.

---

13. Material prosperity is intended here, according to the often repeated promises of the old covenant. Compare especially the teaching of the Book of Proverbs.

14. Compare again Prov. iii. 32, 'His secret is with the righteous.' Such a phrase by itself—and it is by no means solitary—is sufficient to show that the writers in Proverbs were not, as is sometimes said, wholly occupied with the good things of this life and actuated by utilitarian motives. The intimate fellowship implied by the striking phrase 'the secret of Jehovah' is amongst the loftiest and purest blessings of the old and new covenants. Abraham was not the only friend of God, nor Enoch the only one who walked with Him.

15. In the section following the Psalmist turns again to prayer, and he begins by a description of his attitude of soul—mine eyes are 'toward Jehovah.' Sometimes the eyes should be fixed upon the pathway to avoid pitfalls and entanglements; but when a man is hopelessly ensnared he looks up to God for deliverance.

16. Turn thee unto me, &c. Everything for the Psalmist depends on whether God's face is turned towards him or away from him. The outline of the landscape may not be altered, but how do its features and aspect change when from the midst of grey and lowering clouds the sunshine breaks through and the azure of heaven appears!

17. Critics with one consent find the need of a change in the text here. The English reader understands by troubles being 'enlarged' that they are increased and multiplied. The Hebrew cannot mean this, and R. V. marg. indicates the way in which a change may be made with very slight alteration of the letters:—

'The straits of my heart do thou enlarge,
And bring me forth from my distresses.'

Consider mine affliction and my travail; 18
And forgive all my sins.
Consider mine enemies, for they are many; 19
And they hate me with cruel hatred.
O keep my soul, and deliver me: 20
Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee.
Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, 21
For I wait on thee.
Redeem Israel, O God, 22
Out of all his troubles.

A Psalm of David. **26**

Judge me, O LORD, for I have walked in mine integrity: 1

---

18. The missing letter *Qoph* might be restored here by inserting 'Draw near' (Ewald), 'Arise' (Baur), or by changing the word translated 'Consider.' It is hardly likely that two verses would begin with the same word.

19. cruel, or perhaps better, 'violent hatred,' means 'hatred which proceeds from injustice and leads to fresh injustice.' (Delitzsch.)

20. Preserve here, as elsewhere, the characteristic phrase, 'in thee have I taken refuge.' The general phrase, **I put my trust,** is not close and definite enough.

21. Without misgiving can the Psalmist who asked for the pardon of his 'great' iniquity plead, as a reason why he should be heard, his **integrity and uprightness**, and ask that these qualities may still be his protection. Partly because he does not mean by them perfection of character, but only an honest determination to do right; partly because even this excellence is not so much his own as derived from God, **For I wait on thee.**

22. A most fitting close to the Psalm if written by an exile; a most suitable liturgical addition if appended to an earlier Psalm in order to make of it a litany for present needs. The use of the name *Elohim*, rather than the *Yahweh* which is characteristic of the first Book of Psalms, as well as the alphabetical anomaly mentioned above, may indicate that this verse was a later addition. But the prayer admirably harmonizes with the whole spirit of the Psalm, and sums up its petitions.

PSALM XXVI. THE PLEA OF THE UPRIGHT.

No indications of date are found in this Psalm to enable us to fix the circumstances of its composition. It is in all probability

I have trusted also in the LORD without wavering.
2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;
Try my reins and my heart.

---

much later than the time of David. It implies the temple-worship, verse 6, and a sharp division between the godly and the ungodly. The former are clearly in the minority, and the speaker is not a man in authority, verses 9 and 10. Some interpreters (Ewald) find in Pss. xxvi and xxviii references to 'a severe calamity, perhaps a pestilence, sweeping away many human beings,' and from this the Psalmist prays to be delivered. Others (Baethgen) judge that no personal or national event of any kind is referred to, but that the Psalm was composed as a general one, suitable to any pious worshipper in the temple at any time. The truth lies, perhaps, somewhere between these conjectures. The state of society is such that the righteous man is more or less in danger, and he prays with a continual side-glance at gatherings of evil-doers who would gladly do him a mischief; but no special calamity seems to be imminent. We agree with those who would place the Psalm in the prophetic rather than the post-Exilic period.

It may be divided into two parts: 1–7 a protest, 8–12 a prayer. But prayer is contained in the former part and protest in the latter; and a more minute subdivision would find in 1–3 an opening plea; 4–8 a strong self-vindication, and 9–12 a closing petition for deliverance, with its answer.

1. The prayer, 'Judge me, Jehovah,' asks that God would vindicate before the world that righteousness of character and conduct which the Psalmist is conscious of having preserved under circumstances of no small difficulty.

integrity aptly describes the prevailing feature of character which he claims for himself—whole-hearted sincerity of purpose in serving God. The writer does not claim to be sinless; he does claim to be sharply distinguished by the simplicity and earnestness of his devotion from the evil-doers around him, the whole object of whose lives is entirely different from his.

2. That the Psalmist is not guilty of Pharisaic self-righteousness is made clear by two considerations: first, the entire trust in God as his strength expressed in the first verse; secondly, the frank and confident prayer of this verse that God would search his motives through and through. Two kinds of testing or purifying of metal are here referred to; and two parts of man's nature, the **reins** as standing for the affections and desires, the **heart** for the centre of conscious action, the thought which plans and the will which resolves and executes.

For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes; 3
And I have walked in thy truth.
I have not sat with vain persons; 4
Neither will I go in with dissemblers.
I hate the congregation of evil-doers, 5
And will not sit with the wicked.
I will wash mine hands in innocency; 6
So will I compass thine altar, O LORD:
That I may make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard, 7

3. The two safeguards which have kept God's servant from falling into evil—God's **lovingkindness** towards the weak and erring, and his 'faithfulness' in adhering to His word and maintaining His truth.

4. The body of the protestation consists of two parts, marked by past and future tenses, **I have not sat,** 'I will not go.' The Psalmist declares what he has not done, and what he is steadfastly purposed to do. If past and future are thus clear, so far as in him lies, he may well claim God's vindication in the present. 'Vanity,' says Delitzsch, means 'the chaotic emptiness of alienation from God.' It is part of the deep-seated morality of Hebrew thought that wickedness implies unreality: the man who ignores God in his life is hollow, is not in contact with realities, the eternal and unalterable facts of existence. Some consciousness of this is implied in the existence of **dissemblers,** who mask their actual aims, thus paying outward tribute to righteousness.

5. Two kinds of sinners, more or less overt. They may have actually assembled to frame their evil plans; or **congregation** may mean simply company, the 'set' of such as usually consort together for evil.

6. Washing was constantly used in a symbolical sense under the old covenant. But the reference here may be to the ablutions of the priests before they ministered at the altar, Exod. xxx. 17-21; or to the formal hand-washing of the city elders in Deut. xxi. 6, 7, who solemnly protest, 'Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it.' Compare the well-known incident of Pilate, Matt. xxvii. 4. The phrase to 'compass the altar' has been understood as implying a ritual procession round the altar. Such a custom is not recognized in the law, but it is quite possible that it may have grown up in practice. The expression here used does not necessarily imply it.

7. The public worship of God, and the thankful acknowledgement of His providential mercies and deliverance, is a kind of antidote to the spirit which animated the disloyal men who gathered to

And tell of all thy wondrous works.
8 LORD, I love the habitation of thy house,
And the place where thy glory dwelleth.
9 Gather not my soul with sinners,
Nor my life with men of blood:
10 In whose hands is mischief,
And their right hand is full of bribes.
11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity:
Redeem me, and be merciful unto me.
12 My foot standeth in an even place:
In the congregations will I bless the LORD.

---

plot for their own advantage. Amidst the disquietudes and complexities of the present, the Psalmists constantly find relief by celebrating the 'wondrous deeds' which God has wrought for His people in the past.

8. Love for God's house means love for God's presence. His **glory** may be manifested formally, as by the ark, which was the symbol of His dwelling 'between the cherubims,' or by the cloud of glory which filled the house, 2 Chron. v. 14. But the Psalmists lay stress not upon the symbol, but the spiritual reality symbolized.

9, 10. Gather not my soul is understood by some of the best commentators to mean, 'do not destroy my life' in the company of these wicked men; 'let me not share their fate.' So Kirkpatrick, who says, 'How natural a prayer if a pestilence was raging, which seemed to strike righteous and wicked indiscriminately!' but this conjecture, originally made by Ewald, seems gratuitous. The Psalmist pleads that in heart and character he is diametrically opposed to these evil men, and prays that God would discriminate between him and them, that he should not be confused with them or mistaken for one of them—either in their plots, their practices, or their ultimate fate. (So Calvin, Hupfeld.)

blood . . . mischief . . . bribes: they commit violence when they can; they plot maliciously when outrage would be dangerous, and they pervert justice when called to account. Evidently men of position, of substance and influence, are the offenders here.

11. The Psalmist repeats his earlier resolves. **Redeem me** does not necessarily imply that the nation is the subject of the Psalm (Cheyne): it rather means, 'Save me from the punishment which must overtake these evil-doers.'

be merciful: better, 'be gracious unto me.'

12. Already an answer is vouchsafed to his prayer. In spirit

A Psalm of David. **27**

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I 1
fear?
The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I
be afraid?

---

he stands already in that 'open place' which meant freedom and safety. He gives thanks accordingly.

PSALM XXVII. DIVINE LIGHT AND STRENGTH IN WEAL OR WOE.

Good reasons have been assigned for considering this a composite Psalm. At the end of verse 6 a marked change occurs; partly in the rhythm, partly in the style, which becomes cumbrous in contrast to the simplicity of the earlier part, but chiefly in the tone and substance, which changes from the joyful confidence of faith to the plaint of anxious fear. It is of course possible that the Psalm was originally written as one whole in its present form. A change of mood is so far from being remarkable that few Psalms preserve one unbroken level of experience, either of sorrow or joy. But in this case the descent is so marked that it is difficult to understand how any writer's circumstances and outlook should be so suddenly and completely altered. If it be read as one whole, one must suppose that the position of the Psalmist is to be found in verses 13 and 14, that at first he expresses the confidence which the sight of 'the goodness of the Lord' awakened, and that afterwards allows himself to be overcome by fear of the 'enemies round about' him. If in verses 1–6 we have a joyful lyric of earlier date, we may imagine 7–13 to have been added later as a plea of the righteous man who lived in troublous times, and longed to realize the pristine joy, very much as in Isa. lxiii. 7 the prophet sings of Divine goodness and in 17 pleads with the God who seems to have forgotten and forsaken His people.

In this case 1–6 might be conceived as Davidic, although the language of verse 4 seems to point to a later period. The title in the LXX, which ascribes the Psalm to 'David before his anointing,' no doubt proceeds from the view that verse 10 refers to the time when David left his father and mother in Moab (1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4).

1. Nowhere else in the O. T. is God thus directly called **my light,** though the references to the illuminating influence of God's presence and favour are very numerous. The opening words, *Dominus illuminatio mea*, are well known as the motto of the Oxford University.

Render, 'the stronghold of my life' (R. V. marg.), since the idea here is not so much that God supplies strength to the

2 When evil-doers came upon me to eat up my flesh,
Even mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell.
3 Though an host should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear:
Though war should rise against me,
Even then will I be confident.
4 One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after;
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

Psalmist from within, as that He is a strong protection from without against cruel advancing foes.

2. In this verse, and again in verse 10, it is impossible to be sure whether an actually accomplished fact is referred to, or a general statement intended, which is thrown into the concrete as history. We might translate here, as some sound interpreters do,

'When evil-doers come against me, to devour my flesh,
My adversaries and my foes upon me—they stumble and fall.'

The wild beasts ready to devour might be Saul and his myrmidons, or as in Job xix. 22, 'friends' more cruel than foes, who prey upon the reputation of their victim and add a keener pang to his bodily sufferings by taunting him with the fact that God has forsaken him. The simpler meaning seems the better here.

3. The contingent statement of this verse and its outlook into the future seem more significant if verse 2 be taken as a record of actual experience.

4. That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah, &c. Expressions of this kind must not be understood literally. Compare xxiii. 6, lxv. 4. It is not a building with four walls of which the Psalmist is thinking; and it would be a mistake to press the exact meaning of 'palace' in this verse or of 'tent' in verses 5 and 6. An earlier or later structure known as 'God's house' may have suggested the thought; but there were many Beth-els known to O. T. saints besides that to which Jacob gave the name.

It is the presence of Jehovah which delights the soul of the Psalmist; partly because of its 'beauty' or 'pleasantness,' the kindly greeting which lights up the face of the gracious Host;

For in the day of trouble he shall keep me secretly in 5
his pavilion :
In the covert of his tabernacle shall he hide me ;
He shall lift me up upon a rock.
And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine 6
enemies round about me ;
And I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy ;
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice : 7
Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

---

partly because of the mental enlightenment and help given to those who ask questions of this Interpreter in the House Beautiful ; partly (see next verse) because of the security which this home affords, the sure asylum which may be found in this sanctuary.

5. A flimsy tent may be the surest of all refuges in the desert, if reception into it mean that the traveller is under the powerful protection of a Bedouin sheikh. Or, as in the latter part of this verse, a rocky fastness perfectly impregnable against enemies may be the figure employed. In either case it is the presence and favour of God which provides all that is needed. One who enjoys the intimacy of this high communion need fear neither foe nor storm.

6. In verse 3, when dire evils threatened, the Psalmist could utter his **Even then will I be confident** ; here, in the might of his faith he breaks forth with a triumphant **And now . . . I will sing** ! The mention of enemies here is fairly used by those who defend the unity of the Psalm to show that throughout the whole the writer is exposed to danger, and that there is no inconsistency between the thanksgiving of this verse and the suppliant tone of the next. Perowne translates 'sacrifices of shouting' ; Cheyne, 'of resounding mirth' ; and though neither of these phrases is very happy, both contain an element of trumpet-toned jubilation which ought to be expressed, and which the current translation lacks. Compare R. V. marg., 'trumpet-sound.'

7. Render, 'Be gracious also unto me.' Whether the original poet passed at once from the last verse to this, or added the latter portion of the Psalm in another mood, or an altogether later Psalmist blended his sighs with earlier glad songs, the reader of to-day may unite these strains without any serious sense of incongruity. Clouds hide the brightness of the early morning sky ; the Psalmist prays that these may in turn be scattered.

8 *When thou saidst,* Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee,
Thy face, LORD, will I seek.
9 Hide not thy face from me;
Put not thy servant away in anger:
Thou hast been my help;
Cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me,
But the LORD will take me up.
11 Teach me thy way, O LORD;
And lead me in a plain path,
Because of mine enemies.

---

8. At least he may plead that he has ever been a true follower of Jehovah. In this verse emotion masters him, his utterance is broken, and brief to obscurity. It runs literally, 'To thee my heart hath said,' or as the P. B. V. picturesquely, if not quite accurately, 'My heart hath talked of thee, Seek ye my face: Thy face do I seek, Jehovah.' An inner colloquy has been going on: God's voice sounding in the heart, with its gracious invitation met by a response on the part of the Psalmist to the call which summons all God's people to follow Him. Compare cv. 4, 'Seek Jehovah and His strength: seek His face evermore.'

9. Man's best plea is always an echo of God's promise. He who has bidden His servants to seek will not hide His face when they obey Him.

10. The translation of R. V. **have forsaken** is more literal than that of A. V., 'When my father and my mother forsake me.' But it is not certain that past experience is intended, nor that a literal orphanhood or desertion on the part of parents is to be understood. The phrase is a strong expression of loneliness, as the encamping of hosts in verse 3 is of threatened danger. Actual present friendlessness, literal or comparative, is probably implied.

11. Here the Psalmist is not resting in the tranquil security of the Divine pavilion, but groping his way in an unknown country, full of pitfalls laid by enemies who would compass his ruin. He desires to make his way to God's presence, but it can only be by God's path. Hence he asks that this pathway may be made clear, and that it may lie in an 'open place,' where those who lie in wait may gain no advantage over him.

Deliver me not over unto the will of mine adversaries: 12
For false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as
breathe out cruelty.
I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness 13
of the LORD
In the land of the living.
Wait on the LORD: 14
Be strong, and let thine heart take courage;
Yea, wait thou on the LORD.

A Psalm of David. **28**
Unto thee, O LORD, will I call; 1
My rock, be not thou deaf unto me:

---

12. A different kind of danger is hinted at here. In the earlier part of the Psalm it was necessary to encounter open foes and fight at long odds. Here malice shows itself in calumny, and God's servant fears lest the cause of righteousness should be hindered by his making a false step, or by the spread of false reports concerning him. Violence is the mischief of the strong, as fraud is the resort of those who must walk warily.

13. The insertion of 'I had fainted' in A. V. and R. V. gives the meaning excellently. The broken sentence of the original is, however, much more forcible: 'Oh! had I not believed to see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living.' Compare Gen. l. 15, 'Ah! but if Joseph were to show enmity against us'—i. e. then it would go hardly with us indeed.

the land of the living is opposed to Sheol, the land of the shades. It is in this life that man is to praise God (Isa. xxxviii. 19), and it is here, amongst those who inhabit 'the warm precincts of the cheerful day,' that the Psalmist desires to see God's goodness manifested.

14. Hence he calls upon himself to do all that can be done at the moment—wait for God's own time for intervention and deliverance. He bids himself be strong in the citadel of the soul, **let thine heart take courage**: for only those who fortify themselves in faith and in the patience of hope can expect to see the salvation of the Lord.

PSALM XXVIII. PRAYER OF THE RIGHTEOUS IN THE MIDST OF EVIL-DOERS.

There is an obvious and often-noted connexion between this Psalm and Psalm xxvi. The situation is similar, the pleas are almost

Lest, if thou be silent unto me,
I become like them that go down into the pit.
2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee,
When I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.
3 Draw me not away with the wicked,

---

the same. The Psalmist is surrounded by evil and mischief-working men, and is afraid of being involved with them in the fate which sooner or later will overtake them. Whether such fate were imminent in the form of pestilence or threatened destruction does not appear, though the hints to this effect are somewhat stronger than in the companion-Psalm. Many interpreters refer the Psalm to David during his flight from Absalom (Perowne, Kirkpatrick); Ewald suggests Josiah, and Hitzig Jeremiah, as the author, while Cheyne assigns Pss. xxvi, xxvii. 7–14 and xxviii to the time of Nehemiah and the persecution of Sanballat. It may be viewed as a great and abiding advantage—though to the historical student disappointing—that the language of the Psalm is found to suit periods and cases so different as these, together with a multitude besides in all generations.

The first strophe, verses 1 and 2, contains an opening cry; the next, verses 3–5, prays that God would discriminate and save the Psalmist from the punishment that will overtake the wicked; the next, verses 6, 7, describes deliverance as already at the doors; while the closing verses 8 and 9 commend the nation to God in prayer.

1. A pathetic appeal to be heard. Where we say **unto** the Hebrew more graphically says 'Be not silent (*or*, deaf) from me'; i. e. turn not from me like one who is deaf or dumb, or both. When an answer to prayer fails to come, it seems as if God could not or would not hear; and the pious Jew does not hesitate to use bold expressions from which less religious people shrink. It was because the Psalmist really trusted God that he could thus speak.

The expression 'They that go down to the pit' may imply that many were dying, as from pestilence; or more probably it is to be understood in the sense that life is not life without God, and that if He cease to care for His people they sink into the mere nonentity-existence of Sheol. The use of the same phrase in cxliii. 7 seems to show that it was quasi-proverbial.

2. thy holy oracle means the Holy of Holies. Driver and Cheyne translate 'holy chancel,' which introduces a jarring modern note. The rendering of R. V. marg. is somewhat cumbrous; we might read instead, 'toward thine inmost sanctuary.'

3. For the 'Gather me not' of xxvi. 9 we have here 'Drag me

And with the workers of iniquity ;
Which speak peace with their neighbours,
But mischief is in their hearts.
Give them according to their work, and according to the 4
wickedness of their doings :
Give them after the operation of their hands ;
Render to them their desert.
Because they regard not the works of the LORD, 5
Nor the operation of his hands,
He shall break them down and not build them up.

Blessed be the LORD, 6
Because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.
The LORD is my strength and my shield ; 7

---

not away,' which suggests, as the milder phrase does not, that punishment is impending for these evil-doers. But it may indicate only the intense repulsion with which the Psalmist regards the evil practices of his contemporaries, stern judgement upon whom is certain to fall, and the righteous can only welcome it.

4, 5. The imperative of the fourth verse is not identical in meaning with the future of the fifth, but the two are closely akin. The Psalmist asks that retribution may come, and he contemplates it as sure to come, in both cases viewing it as the necessary vindication of God's righteous government in the earth.

The reiteration of the phrase 'works and operation of his hands' is very effective. Only one kind of work is truly stable in history the Psalmist would say, viz. the Divine. Those who 'fix on God's work their steadfast eye' will find that 'their work is done' so as to abide. But 'every branch that my Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.' The phrases to 'break down' and 'build up,' used of persons, are frequently found in the O. T., especially in Jeremiah.

6. A sudden outburst of praise, no more accounted for in the context than the sudden change from exultation to supplication in xxvii. 7. Some commentators find in the verses that follow a later addition, announcing that the prayer had been heard and answered. It seems more natural, however, to find the change in the Psalmist's own spirit, and to read this verse as the confident utterance of the faith which is 'the giving substance to things hoped for.'

7. All the expressions of this verse confirm the view just taken. There is no note of actual objective deliverance.

My heart hath trusted in him, and I am helped:
Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth;
And with my song will I praise him.
8 The LORD is their strength,
And he is a strong hold of salvation to his anointed.
9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance:
Feed them also, and bear them up for ever.

29 A Psalm of David.

1 Give unto the LORD, O ye sons of the mighty,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.

8, 9. Whether David or Jeremiah, or some obscure saint, be the speaker, this reference to the king and the nation forms a natural and appropriate climax to the Psalm. As the text stands, **their strength** refers to the people, mention of whom follows. A slight change of reading would give, as in LXX, Vulg. and Syr., 'Jehovah is a strength unto his people' (R. V. marg.).

The closing prayer is very suggestive; **Feed them** should rather be 'Tend them,' *lit.* 'Shepherd them'; for in that single word all kinds of loving help and 'governance' are included. In the last clause, to **bear them up** describes one feature only of the shepherd's care, though it is one which Christian art has made gratefully familiar in its application to the Good Shepherd. That which Moses, for all his great-hearted patience, found himself unable to do for Israel in the wilderness (Exod. xvii. 4) God did throughout the generations—He 'bare and carried them all the days of old,' Isa. lxiii. 9. No prayer for church or nation can ask a higher boon than this, that God would 'shepherd them and bear them up for ever.'

Psalm XXIX. The Voice of God in the Storm.

The 'Psalm of the seven thunders,' as Delitzsch styles it. The noun 'thunder' does not occur in the Psalm, and the verb but once; but there can be no mistaking the meaning of the seven times repeated 'voice of Jehovah' which peals over earth and sea. In several places (e. g. Job xxviii. 26 and xxxviii. 25) the word translated 'thunder' is simply 'voices'; compare the association of the two words in the Apocalypse (viii. 5, xi. 19, &c.). Thunderstorms, such as are seldom seen in this country, are frequent in Palestine in winter, and the Jew found in them special manifestations of the might and majesty of Jehovah. Compare

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; 2
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: 3
The God of glory thundereth,
Even the LORD upon many waters.
The voice of the LORD is powerful; 4
The voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

---

the sublime description of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai in Exod. xix.

Few finer poetical descriptions of a storm are to be found in literature. But the Psalmist did not labour to produce a piece of fine writing. Because his art vanishes in presence of his religion, the effect of highest art is unconsciously produced. Ewald ascribes the Psalm to David. It falls naturally into three parts—an introduction, verses 1 and 2; the sevenfold utterance of the voice of God, verses 3-9; and the conclusion, verses 10 and 11.

1. A magnificent exordium. The Psalmist calls upon the highest of the celestial hosts to celebrate the Divine glory which he feels himself unable to utter aright.

R. V. marg. shows that it is doubtful whether we should read, 'sons of God,' or 'sons of the gods'; i. e. whether the word *Elim* is to be understood in the highest or in a secondary sense. Examples of both uses are found; see Job xxxviii. 7 and Ps. xcvii. 7. But in either case the angels are meant, and it is more satisfactory, and more in accordance with O. T. usage, to consider them as sons of God, as standing in His immediate presence, and as the highest of His creatures in strength and glory, than to view them as 'sons of the gods,' i. e. superhuman powers in a semi-mythological sense.

2. Heaven is exhibited as rendering homage, before the tribute of earth is offered. Render, 'Worship Jehovah in holy array' (R. V. marg.); the heavenly priests in the upper temple are represented as if attiring themselves to conduct celestial worship aright. The phrase **beauty of holiness** has wrought itself into our language, but it hardly represents the original meaning.

3. The first peal. It is heard as coming over the sea from the west, whence storms arise often with great rapidity. The last line is most majestic of all, 'Jehovah is on many waters.'

4. The second and third peals come in quick succession; the terse, onomatopoetic phrases of the Hebrew enhance the effect. The voice of Jehovah is 'with power, with majesty'; these weighty words prepare the way for the detailed description to follow.

5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars;
Yea, the LORD breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf;
Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild-ox.
7 The voice of the LORD cleaveth the flames of fire.
8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness;
The LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve,
And strippeth the forests bare:
And in his temple every thing saith, Glory.

10 The LORD sat *as king* at the Flood;

5, 6. Trees and mountains, symbols of stability, are first named. Cedars, strong as the hills on which they grow, are snapped in pieces; the very mountains shake to their foundations, and leap in terror like the antelope or wild-ox. **Sirion** is an old Sidonian name for Hermon.

7. A single line in the very middle of the description comes like a flash of the lightning it describes:—

'The voice of Jehovah heweth out flames of fire.'

From the dark storm-cloud as quarry the forked lightning darts forth quivering, as if flakes of fire were hewn out by an Almighty hand.

8. As in the far north the loftiest mountains are represented as shaken to their foundations, so in the south country the open 'wilderness' trembles as this awful voice peals across its expanse. **Kadesh** is a term somewhat vaguely used here, but it may be taken as indicating generally the 'treeless limestone plateau' which is found between the valley of Arabah and the plains of Philistia, stretching along the southern border of Judah.

9. Render, 'maketh the hinds to writhe in travail.' The effects noted in this verse, both as regards trees and animals, are no mere poetical figures.

The last line takes us back to the palace of the skies. There is but one sound to be heard—**Glory!** This is the response made to the appeal of the poet in the opening of the Psalm. The angelic hosts have witnessed this display of majestic energy, and they renew the song which God's works continually evoke from the heavenly choirs.

10. Then, having once obtained this glimpse into heaven, the Psalmist ventures to describe the throne and Him who sits thereon.

Yea, the LORD sitteth as king for ever.
The LORD will give strength unto his people; 11
The LORD will bless his people with peace.

A Psalm; a Song at the Dedication of the House; 30
a Psalm of David.

I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast raised me up, 1
And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

The translation of R. V., **Jehovah sat** as king **at the Flood,** is almost certainly correct in leading the thought back to the great deluge of Gen. vi, of which the Psalmist is reminded by the tremendous downpour of rain following these repeated thunders. Supreme over that catastrophe of judgement in the days of Noah there sat a King, enthroned above all, holding the winds in His fists and the waters in the hollow of His hand, determining when the rain should fall and the moment when it should cease. But He who was King then is King always, and this, hints the Psalmist, is the one main lesson which the storms of life should teach the children of men.

11. Unless, indeed, there be a higher and even more comforting one—that out of such convulsions and cataclysms are to come the two things men most need, **strength** and **peace.** No music could be sweeter and softer than the 'dying fall' of the last line in the Hebrew, after the roaring of the storm is over. All is well when Heaven cries Glory and earth echoes Peace.

PSALM XXX. THANKSGIVING FOR DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH.

If this Psalm be considered apart from its title, and the words taken in their natural meaning, it is seen to consist of praise to God after recovery from a dangerous illness. Verses 2 and 3, and again 8 and 9, are conclusive as to this. When we turn to the title—as printed in R. V., the punctuation in A. V. is incorrect—we find it to be unusual in form. The words 'of David' are separated from the word 'Psalm' with which they are usually joined, and between them is another description of the lyric, with a different word to describe it, this being the only instance in Book I in which this word *Shir,* or 'Song,' is found.

If the title be taken as one whole, it can only mean that the Psalm was originally composed by David either (1) at the dedication, not of the temple, but of the site of the temple at the threshing-floor of Ornan, after the pestilence described in 1 Chron. xxi. 28, or (2) at the dedication of his own palace in Zion, see 2 Sam. v. 11. There is serious objection to both these explanations. The first

2 O LORD my God,
I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.
3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol:

---

was not, properly speaking, the dedication of a house, though in 1 Chron. xxii. 1 David is reported to have said, 'This is the house—and the altar'; and in the second case, David's palace was not, properly speaking, 'dedicated,' a word being employed which is not suitable either for a private house or a royal palace. Further, those who adopt this latter explanation as the most probable are obliged to suppose that at the time David was recovering from a serious sickness—a wholly gratuitous supposition.

The view is therefore generally accepted by later commentators that the title is composite, the words 'a Song at the Dedication of the House' having been inserted later, and indicating not the occasion of the original composition, but the liturgical use to which the Psalm was subsequently put.

What 'house,' then, is intended? We know that in later times a Feast of Dedication, mentioned in John x. 22, was instituted by Judas Maccabaeus to commemorate the purification of the temple after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes, see 1 Macc. iv. 59. We know, moreover, from the Talmud that this Psalm was in later times sung at that festival. It is not unnatural, therefore, to conclude that this was the occasion intended in the title. This is, however, in all probability not the case. It would imply that the title of a Psalm in Book I was thus somewhat awkwardly altered after B. C. 160—a perfectly possible, but not probable, supposition. It is much more likely that the Psalm was adapted for use at the dedication of the second temple under Ezra, when we are told that the people 'kept the dedication of this house of God with joy' (vi. 16). The nation at that time was like a sick man recovering from a wellnigh fatal illness, and other Psalms show that this figure of speech came naturally to the lips of those who had just returned from captivity and desired to praise God for deliverance. If this was so, and the title 'for the dedication' prefixed soon after the Exile, when Book I was collected, it is easy to understand the use made of it in later times.

The outline of the Psalm is clear. In verses 1–3 the Psalmist praises God for recovered health; in 4–6 he generalizes, calling on others to recognize similar manifestations of Divine goodness; in 7–10 he recounts his own experience in greater detail; while in 11, 12 he resolves that his thanksgiving shall be rendered not only with his lips but in his life.

1–3. Thou hast drawn me up: from the depths of suffering, or humiliation, or despair—or from the gates of death. The word is applicable to any of these experiences, but most appropriate in the

Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to
the pit.
Sing praise unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, 4
And give thanks to his holy name.
For his anger is but for a moment; 5
In his favour is life:
Weeping may tarry for the night,
But joy *cometh* in the morning.
As for me, I said in my prosperity, 6
I shall never be moved.

---

last. The deliverance from the malignity of foes who would have rejoiced at the Psalmist's calamity does not sound natural in our ears, if the recovery was simply from sickness. But other Psalms, and Eastern experience generally, show that an almost savage delight in the personal misfortunes of an enemy was usual enough. God's raising up of the sufferer from a dying bed was a proof of personal favour which would silence heartless foes.

4. The **saints** in this verse are those who are connected with Jehovah by covenant-bonds and have made proof of His gracious fidelity to His promises. Compare Ps. l. 5.

to his holy name: *lit.* 'to the memorial of his holiness.' History is His monument and lasting memorial. It is the recollection of the self-manifestation which God has made of Himself which prompts the thanksgiving: God's 'name' is the expression of that manifestion, and 'holiness' is the sum of His attributes.

5. Render the second clause, with R. V. marg., 'His favour is for a life time.' This preserves the parallelism, though the extreme brevity of the original makes it quite possible that the antithesis implied in the text of A. V. and R. V. gives the author's meaning.

The metaphor in the latter part of the verse is beautiful, and only partially brought out even in R. V. It runs, 'Weeping may be a guest for the night, but in the morning—is a ringing cry of joy!' But the English reader must understand that for this clumsy paraphrase in eighteen words the original has only five. The 'morning of joy' is frequently referred to in the Psalms; see xc. 14 and cxliii. 8.

6. A chapter from past history. Time was, says the Psalmist, when I knew the proverbial ease and security of the prosperous. The rich fool in our Lord's parable is but the type of all who in the abundance of worldly possessions forget their dependence

7 Thou, LORD, of thy favour hadst made my mountain to
stand strong:
Thou didst hide thy face; I was troubled.
8 I cried to thee, O LORD;
And unto the LORD I made supplication:
9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to
the pit?
Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?
10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me:
LORD, be thou my helper.
11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing;

---

on God, and imagine that nothing can shake their well-grounded self-confidence.

7. The former clause of this verse is not easy to translate as it stands; the versions vary, and the Targum paraphrases. The meaning of 'Thou hadst established strength for my mountain' is clear enough, though in all probability the text should be altered so as to give, 'Thou hadst made me to stand upon strong mountains.'

A moment—and all is changed. The hiding of God's face changes the landscape of the life more than the obscuration of the sun changes the aspect of the fields. The Psalmist does not say what happened in his life: it was probably a sudden and severe sickness, but he was made to quail with a consternation and bewilderment which our English word **troubled** feebly expresses.

8. We are reminded of Hezekiah's plea in Isa. xxxviii. Both he and the Psalmist had learned the lesson of affliction and the true way in which to use it. The tense of **I cried** takes the writer and reader back very vividly to the scene as enacted: it might be paraphrased, 'Behold me crying!'

9. The same view of death is implied here which meets us in the sixth and several other Psalms, as well as in the dirge of Hezekiah. Life in Sheol is not worthy to be called life, and if God remove His servant thither He will lose His 'little meed of human praise.'

11. Again the transition is sudden, a revolution is accomplished by the appearance of the sun from behind the cloud. The rendering, 'Thou didst turn—didst loose—didst gird,' points more directly to the moment of deliverance.

The language is, of course, figurative. Calvin, who does not accept the interpretation of a literal recovery from sickness,

Thou hast loosed my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness:

To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. 12

O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. 31

In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: 1

---

comments that it is unlikely that David would wear sackcloth on a sick-bed. But the expression is proverbial, like the 'garland for ashes' in Isa. lxi. 3. This does not, of course, exclude Calvin's point that the Psalmist mourned as a true penitent before God.

12. My glory: i. e. my soul, as man's special treasure and title to honour. The resolution with which the Psalm closes is obviously the utterance of a man who wishes to prove in practice as long as he lives the reality of his gratitude to the 'God of his salvation.'

PSALM XXXI. PRAYERFUL SURRENDER INTO THE HANDS OF GOD.

Tradition assigns this Psalm to David. The title in the LXX ascribes it to a period of 'extreme fear,' which is supposed to be that of his stay in the wilderness of Maon (1 Sam. xxiii. 26; compare the 'alarm' of verse 22 in the Psalm). But there are many points of parallel with passages in Jeremiah. The whole situation described, as well as the plaintive tone in the writing, suggest rather the circumstances of Jeremiah's time, while *Magor-Missabib* (verse 13) is a phrase indissolubly associated with that prophet: compare Jer. vi. 25, xx. 3, 10, &c. The similarities in phraseology may be traced in detail; specimens may be found in verse 10 compared with Jer. xx. 18, and in verse 22 compared with Lam. iii. 54. It is known that Jeremiah's writings are full of reminiscences of other authors, and the prophet may have been quoting the Psalmist, but the probability is that the Psalm itself emanates from the later period. There is no reason, with Ewald, to suppose that Jeremiah himself was the author.

The conjecture has been advanced that the paragraph 9–18, the tone of which differs markedly from the earlier and later portions of the Psalm, is of later origin, whilst the rest is Davidic. A change of mood, as we have repeatedly seen, does not imply a change of author. None the less it is quite possible that in this case a 'Davidic' Psalm of great vigour and buoyancy has been

Deliver me in thy righteousness.
2 Bow down thine ear unto me; deliver me speedily:
Be thou to me a strong rock, an house of defence to save me.
3 For thou art my rock and my fortress;
Therefore for thy name's sake lead me and guide me.
4 Pluck me out of the net that they have laid privily for me;
For thou art my strong hold.
5 Into thine hand I commend my spirit:

---

adapted for use in a later period of national trouble. If such a practice of modification was at all frequent—and there are good reasons for supposing this—the present case would appear to afford a good example.

In any case the divisions of the Psalm are very clearly marked. The first section, verses 1–8, recognizes past mercies and contains prayers for deliverance, whilst in the last, verses 19–24, gratitude predominates over petition. The middle section, verses 9–18, breathes a plaintive plea for help in the extremity of suffering, such as can hardly under any circumstances have come from David's pen.

1. Render, 'In thee have I taken refuge.' The often-repeated plea that the Psalmist may not be **ashamed** implies partly the fear of disappointment and loss of faith within, occasioned by God's apparent desertion; partly to the anticipated triumph without, of those who had set themselves against God and the servant of God. Compare xxii. 7 f. God's **righteousness** is pledged to the defence of the right, and upon this the Psalmist rests in confidence.

2, 3. It is a shallow criticism to urge that if God actually is a stronghold for His servants they need not pray that He would be such. On the contrary, these words express the very spirit of true prayer, which does not seek to change the nature or to bend the will of an All-gracious as well as an All-wise God, but which implores that the Divine Will may manifest the Divine Nature in the supplicant's behalf.

Hence, in the latter part of verse 3, some translate, 'Thou wilt lead me and guide me.' Whether the words form a petition or a statement, they express trustful confidence.

4. The metaphors here, if closely pressed, are somewhat mixed. In the former clause the Psalmist is caught in the snare of the fowler, in the latter he flies for refuge from an enemy into a fastness. But the figures in these often-recurring petitions have passed almost into the language of ordinary life; they are graphic current expressions, not to be elaborated into similes.

5. An often-quoted verse, rendered sacred to Christians by the

Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD, thou God of truth.
I hate them that regard lying vanities: 6
But I trust in the LORD.
I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: 7
For thou hast seen my affliction;
Thou hast known my soul in adversities:
And thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; 8
Thou hast set my feet in a large place.
Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in distress: 9

Saviour's use of it upon the cross. Saints of all ages have sought thus to follow their Master at the approach of death, and no words can be more appropriate than these when the moment of 'yielding up the spirit' draws near. But they were not originally written with this view, and should be read in the light of active service, as well as in that of resignation to an inevitable lot. The life which was originally received from God, which has been, so to speak, restored in past deliverances when God has redeemed it from destruction, is here by an act of faith placed in God's hands, in the confidence that He will defend and preserve it again.

6. This verse points rather to the time of Jeremiah than to that of David. **Lying vanities,** *lit.* 'empty nothings,' refers to idols and idol-worship. See Jer. viii. 19, where the parallel word is 'graven images,' and x. 8, where 'doctrine of vanities' means that those who worship 'stocks and stones' are likely to be 'wooden' and insensate, as a stream cannot rise above its source. The LXX and other versions follow another reading, 'Thou hast hated'; either gives good sense.

The prayer of Jonah contains the characteristic phrase of this verse, but it is impossible to adduce evidence as to the relative date of the Psalm embodied in the prophecy and that contained in the Psalter.

7. Some render this as prayer, 'Let me be glad,' i. e. 'Do thou help me to rejoice,' and the following clauses as prophetic perfects, only anticipatory of deliverance to come. But the simpler meaning is the better. The Psalmist is recording actual mercies in the past, and rousing his own soul to joy in the retrospect.

8. The 'large room' is, of course, the wide and open space which stands for freedom, power of expatiation, gracious opportunity and a clear course for action. See xviii. 19 and many similar passages. 'Broad space' would be a better translation.

9. The literary question raised in the Introduction concerning this and the following verses is subordinate, and perhaps can

Mine eye wasteth away with grief, *yea*, my soul and my body.

10 For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing:
My strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are wasted away.

11 Because of all mine adversaries I am become a reproach,
Yea, unto my neighbours exceedingly, and a fear to mine acquaintance:
They that did see me without fled from me.

---

never be settled. Whether a hymn containing many stanzas, describing different and apparently incompatible moods, was written by one author at one time, as embodying diversified experience, or by the same author at different times, or by different authors expressing the same deep religious confidence under widely differing circumstances, can only be determined by fuller knowledge than we possess in the case of the Psalms. The line of interpretation adopted in Ps. xxvii holds good here. The Psalm now is one whole, and if it be read as such, verses 9-18 describe the misery of the present in sharp contrast with the remembered mercy and joy of the past.

9. The physical marks of deep sorrow are here enumerated, the sinking of the eyes and the wasting of the frame. These need not be literally understood, though Jeremiah and other sufferers of his time were not unacquainted with such experiences.

10. Interpreters differ as to whether the word translated **iniquity** points to some secret sin which the Psalmist confesses as his worst trouble, or whether, with LXX, Syr., and other versions, it should be understood, like all the other clauses, of 'affliction.' If sin be intended, this is the one note of the kind in a plea which is emphatically that of a man found faithful among the faithless.

11. The clause **Because of all mine adversaries** reads awkwardly, and a different arrangement of clauses has been suggested, as well as sundry emendations of the text. But it expresses in a terse and somewhat abrupt form the reason of the Psalmist's desertion by his friends. The persecuted man soon becomes unpopular, even amongst those who ought to know his character and judge him fairly. Three concentric circles are described—neighbours, acquaintances, and chance onlookers; he is shunned by all alike, as a man out of favour with the authorities, perhaps under Divine condemnation. Jeremiah speaks of being made a laughing-stock to some of his friends, whilst others

I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: 12
I am like a broken vessel.
For I have heard the defaming of many, 13
Terror on every side:
While they took counsel together against me,
They devised to take away my life.
But I trusted in thee, O LORD: 14
I said, Thou art my God.
My times are in thy hand: 15
Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.
Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: 16
Save me in thy lovingkindness.

---

denounced him and exulted over every trip he made; his 'familiar friends' watched 'for his halting,' xx. 7, 10.

12. Neglect has reached such a point that it is almost worse than persecution. Who cares for a dead man, or a potsherd left in the dungheap?

13. *Magor-missabib* may have been a proverb. **Terror on every side** was not a rare phenomenon in the chequered history of Israel. The name was given in threatening derision to Pashhur, who was to be a terror to himself and to all his friends, Jer. xx. 3, 4; but the phrase is also used to describe the desolation of Jerusalem after the Babylonish invasion in Lam. ii. 22, and the individual saint had often occasion to employ it as too aptly descriptive of his condition. Hence we cannot say that the Psalmist borrowed it from the prophet, or vice versa.

14. Render, 'But I—I trust in Thee, O Jehovah.' The Psalmist is now turning again to the source of strength of which he had sung in the first stanza; but at present only in resignation and prayer; rejoicing comes later.

15, 16. My times: the plural seems to refer especially to what we call crises or epochs in life, when there is special need of help, or special comfort in the thought that all are under the control of a God of love. Or the phrase may point only to life as a whole: see 1 Chron. xxix. 30, where we read of the acts of David 'and the times that went over him.'

Three prayers follow—for deliverance, for Divine favour, and for 'salvation' in the larger sense of the word. The petition, **Make thy face to shine,** used in the priestly benediction of Num. vi. 25, is often found on the lips of O. T. saints. Compare Ps. lxvii.

17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called
upon thee:
Let the wicked be ashamed, let them be silent in Sheol.
18 Let the lying lips be dumb;
Which speak against the righteous insolently,
With pride and contempt.
19 Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up
for them that fear thee,
Which thou hast wrought for them that put their trust
in thee, before the sons of men!
20 In the covert of thy presence shalt thou hide them from
the plottings of man:
Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the
strife of tongues.

17, 18. These verses form a link with the opening of the Psalm, and help to maintain its unity. Some read the tenses as futures—'I shall not be ashamed,' &c., but at this point the Psalmist seems still to be in the mood of prayer. The words of his wicked oppressors are marked by (1) falsehood, (2) pride, (3) contempt: well may he long that such lips should be silenced by the only power that can control them.

19. Once again the music changes. It is as if a fuller revelation had been made of 'the other side of cloudland,' and the thought of the storehouse of Divine grace and all that it contains of succour banishes fear and sorrow.

The last clause **before the sons of men** reads somewhat awkwardly in our version. It depends upon the verb **wrought**, and its emphatic position brings out the truth that the wealth in the storehouse is available and producible in times of need, so that the most sceptical must acknowledge its power and value. Render, 'Dealt out unto them that take refuge in Thee—in the sight of the children of men.'

20. The 'hiding' is suggested by the 'taking refuge' of the last verse. If the harsh and arrogant voices of evil-doers are not at once silenced, God's servant has a quiet retreat in which he may be preserved from danger, forget his trouble, and be strengthened for further service. God's presence is such a pavilion for the righteous. Many commentators emphasize the paradox of being hidden in light, but the thought of the brightness of the Divine Face and Presence seems for the moment to have given

Blessed be the LORD:
For he hath shewed me his marvellous lovingkindness in a strong city.
As for me, I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes:
Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.
O love the LORD, all ye his saints:
The LORD preserveth the faithful,
And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.
Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
All ye that hope in the LORD.

---

place to the protection of His embrace and the shelter enjoyed by those admitted to intimate communion with Him.

21. If this verse records actual history it can hardly have been written at the same time as verses 9 and 12, unless a long and chequered experience is as it were dramatized by the Psalmist and presented in a series of pictures.

in a strong city: not to be understood literally, either of David in Ziklag or of Jeremiah in Jerusalem, but generally and metaphorically of that 'safe stronghold' which God continually provides for those who trust Him.

22. in my haste: rather, 'alarm,' see R. V. marg. Both LXX and Jerome use words which imply extreme fear, that measure of 'affright' which deprives a man of his senses. 'Haste' is an altogether inadequate rendering, and the whole verse implies peril which had reduced the Psalmist to utter despair. His momentary loss of faith and hope did not, however, prevent him from crying for help, and he regards it as 'marvellous lovingkindness' that God heard and succoured him.

23, 24. Such experiences warrant the Psalmist in encouraging and exhorting others. **Preserveth the faithful** is probably the correct translation, not 'keepeth faithfulness' as in R. V. marg. The **proud doer** is the antithesis of the faithful man; self-confidence is associated with evil in O.T. ethics, as faith is with righteousness.

Those who **hope in Jehovah** wait for Him (marg.), for 'if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' Those addressed in the last verse formed apparently in the time of the Psalmist a class—probably a small band—who were content to 'hope and quietly wait for the salvation of Jehovah' (Lam. iii.

32 *A Psalm* of David. Maschil.

1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin
is covered.

---

26). The lying lips were not yet silent, and the word of encouragement from one who had found refuge in the 'secret pavilion' and the 'strong city' forms an appropriate close to a Psalm which abundantly illustrates the tenacity and triumph of faith.

PSALM XXXII. THE JOY OF THE FORGIVEN SINNER.

The second of the seven 'penitential' Psalms. It exhibits more of the mystic joys of penitence than Ps. vi or Ps. xxxviii, and is in its spirit akin to Ps. cxxx. All the older commentators and many even of modern critics allow it to be Davidic, or at least find its language to be appropriate in David's lips after his great sin in the matter of Bath-sheba and Uriah. It is clear, however, that this Psalm does not portray the bitterness of soul felt by the newly awakened conscience, nor the contrite anguish of the spirit overwhelmed with self-reproach at the thought of heinous sin. The man who wrote it must have passed through such experiences, but they could hardly have been very recent, and he has certainly emerged from them into the freedom and sunshine of pardon. The modern tendency—illustrated by Canon Cheyne amongst others—to treat such a Psalm as this as 'principally if not exclusively national' is surely mistaken. Such an interpretation empties the words of their simple and natural meaning, and strikes a chill into the heart of the most spiritual religion of the O. T. That a 'pious Israelite' of post-Exilic days in recounting his own experiences should think also of 'every one that is godly' is quite intelligible, but confession, contrition and the joy of pardon are primarily individual, and it is only in a secondary though doubtless a real sense that the words which express these feelings apply to the community.

The opening of the Psalm, verses 1 and 2, describes the blessedness of forgiveness; the next three verses recount the Psalmist's deep and sore grief over his sin, till he brought it in confession to God and was pardoned. Then he generalizes in verses 6–10, showing the folly of hardening the heart against a God so graciously ready to receive all who turn to Him in penitence, and (verse 11) the unspeakable happiness of those who know Jehovah as their God.

For the term 'Maschil' see Introd. p. 16. It is not probable that the word refers to the contents of the Psalm, as if it were 'didactic' or 'contemplative' in character, but if 'Maschil' be derived from a root which indicates 'skill,' it may have a musical reference and indicate a more artistic and elaborate musical

Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not 2
iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no guile.
When I kept silence, my bones waxed old 3
Through my roaring all the day long.
For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: 4

---

accompaniment than usual. See also Psalm xlvii. 7, where the word is rendered 'with understanding,' or 'in a skilful Psalm.'

1, 2. The word translated **blessed** does not necessarily imply the inward and spiritual joy of the N. T. beatitude. Here it conveys a shade of meaning absent from Ps. i. 1, where the outward lot and condition of the righteous man is the main theme.

Three kinds of deliverance are mentioned, all denoting removal of the guilt of sin. The distinction between the three words **transgression, sin,** and **iniquity** should probably not be pressed, though etymologically they indicate respectively disobedience, failure, and perversity. But it is well to note that at this stage in the history of Israel the meaning of forgiveness was so well understood. It is here described as (*a*) the lifting of a burden; (*b*) the protecting from deserved wrath; (*c*) release from a justly incurred debt. The personal element in forgiveness is thus excellently brought out. Sin disturbs the relation between God and the soul, it is this which constitutes the essence of the evil, and nothing but the full restoration of that spiritual harmony will 'save' the man, or bring him into the state of blessedness here described.

The last clause of verse 2 is by some interpreted to mean the condition on which forgiveness will be granted. In that case **no guile** would mean perfect sincerity in confessing and forsaking sin. This seems, however, an inappropriate climax, and the phrase should be understood as describing the clear, uninterrupted communion with God enjoyed by the forgiven sinner, when the deceitfulness and perverseness of sin has been put away. It corresponds to the 'clean heart' of li. 10. 'God's kiss of forgiveness sucks the poison from the wound' (Maclaren).

3, 4. A chapter from the experience of one who knows. The suffering of these verses is caused by the wrong-doer's determination to cling to his sin, his **silence** is equivalent to a refusal to 'cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff.' It is not necessary to understand that he passed through actual sickness, though the picture of a man groaning aloud in pain, the framework of his body shaken, the vital juices parched with fever, seems at first to suggest this. The significant clause is, **thy hand was heavy upon**

My moisture was changed *as* with the drought of summer.
[Selah
5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity
have I not hid:
I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;
And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. [Selah
6 For this let every one that is godly pray unto thee in
a time when thou mayest be found:
Surely when the great waters overflow they shall not
reach unto him.

---

me. Whether conscience was troubled within, or sickness laid the offender low, or both, the Psalmist recognizes that the process of humbling was God's work. When day and night he obtained no rest he recognized why and by whom his heart was made restless, as Augustine—with whom this Psalm was a favourite—did long afterwards. This 'evangelical' tone in the Psalm touches universal experience, when conscience is once awakened.

5. The pathway to the light. First, the truth must be recognized and faced. The four clauses of this verse describe the process. In the first the tense 'I began to acknowledge' indicates the action in its incipiency and progress. We see the penitent coming, and hear him beginning to speak. The next, 'I did not hide,' describes a completed action. The next, **I said, I will confess,** takes us back to the inner movements of the spirit which made the confession complete; while the last should be rendered **And thou,** 'thou didst forgive the iniquity of my sin!'

This verse is marked off by a double **Selah**—a musical interlude occurring before and after it. It may be conceived that in the former case the accompaniment would be rendered 'piano' upon the strings, while in the latter the 'loud-sounding cymbals' would be needed.

6. For this means 'because of this, because thou art a gracious and forgiving God.' The word *chasid*, translated **godly,** designates the man who comes within God's covenant of grace—Israel in the Old Testament, all the world in the New. The Psalmist bids all such to pray, and assures them that the time of praying will be 'a time of finding,' the time of asking will be a time of acceptance; see Ps. lxix. 13. There may be a hint, as in Isa. lv. 6 and elsewhere, that sometimes God may not be found, but that note would jar in this connexion; and the assurance of the latter clause, that 'the waters in full flood shall not reach unto him,' shows that the prayer of the penitent will assuredly be heard.

Thou art my hiding place; thou wilt preserve me from trouble; 7
Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance.
[Selah
I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: 8
I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee.
Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: 9
Whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in,
Else they will not come near unto thee.
Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: 10

7. Thou art my hiding place, &c. A natural and appropriate turning of the heart to God in grateful recognition. In such matters it is hard to speak of God without speaking to Him. The Psalmist has found his hiding and resting place, in it he is not only guarded from danger but as it were encircled with strains of music and songs of gladness. Everything that happens to him becomes an occasion of rejoicing.

8. After an interlude the personal pronouns change again. God speaks, and in response to His servant's appeal promises him instruction, counsel, and guidance. The beautiful suggestiveness of A. V., 'I will guide thee with mine eye,' need not be wholly lost, though R. V. shows that the Hebrew does not mean that 'a look is enough.' It means that with a Divine word of counsel in the ear, and the eye of Providence watching from above, the traveller in the pathway of life will be safe.

9. But the kindliness and gentleness of God's guidance is suggested by this verse. A true *chasid*, loving and beloved, should find the glance of the Divine eye sufficient both for warning and direction. The rendering of R. V., Else **they will not come near unto thee,** has removed the awkwardness of A. V., and made it clear that the contrast lies between the curb and bridle which animals need if they are to be guided rightly, and the free and unconstrained service which ought to be rendered by a man who is in gracious covenant-relation with God. One may well compare the 'free' or 'willing spirit' of Ps. li. 12, and the well-known lines which paraphrase cxvi. 16:—

'The mercy that hath loosed my bands Hath bound me fast to Thee.'

10. God reserves His bit and bridle, and uses even scourges

But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous:
And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

33 Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous:
Praise is comely for the upright.

---

and goads, for such as will not be led by kindness. The **sorrows** here mentioned may be viewed as punishments for evil committed, or as chastisements to lead to a better mind. The context seems to show that the former are intended. The lot of the wicked is strongly contrasted with that of the trustful and obedient man. In verse 7 he was represented as surrounded with songs of triumph, here he is encompassed by God's lovingkindness. The two circles coincide. He who is girded with mercy is crowned with joy.

11. The Psalmist closes with an invitation corresponding to that in verse 6. There the godly were bidden to pray, here they are exhorted to rejoice. Those who faithfully obey the former precept will hardly need the latter.

PSALM XXXIII. A SONG OF NATIONAL DELIVERANCE.

Contrary to the rule in the First Book, this Psalm is without a title. The only other exceptions are Pss. i and ii which are introductory, and x which is closely linked with ix. Thus this Psalm may be styled the only anonymous one in the body of the Book. The LXX ascribes it to David. In character also it belongs to the later, national, liturgical psalmody, of which abundant examples are to be found in Book V. There is little or nothing in the Psalm itself to guide us as to date, but the praise here rendered to Jehovah as the God of the whole earth and the ruler of the nations at large, and what may be described as the 'universalistic' tone of the Psalm generally, would point to a comparatively late period for its composition.

It is markedly symmetrical in structure. Between two strophes of six lines which begin and end the Psalm are to be found eight quatrains. Thus verses 1–3 form an introduction; verses 4–19 form the body of the Psalm and describe God's moral attributes, His work in creation, His rule over the nations and special care of His own people; while verses 20–22 contain the praise which this favoured people in full chorus render to Him.

1. The opening word translated **Rejoice** implies a 'ringing cry' of joy, a jubilant outburst of thanksgiving which our English

Give thanks unto the LORD with harp:
Sing praises unto him with the psaltery of ten strings.
Sing unto him a new song;
Play skilfully with a loud noise.
For the word of the LORD is right;
And all his work is *done* in faithfulness.
He loveth righteousness and judgement:
The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.

---

word feebly expresses. The praise in this case is to be offered by those best qualified to present it, as well as best able to appreciate the grounds for it. The **righteous** and the **upright** are not simply men who are 'of Israel,' they are the true Israel of God.

2. Two musical instruments are named here, not three as in A. V. The names in Hebrew are *Kinnor* and *nebhel*, the exact meaning of which has been much debated. But, if we divide stringed instruments of the class in question into three types—the lyre, the lute or guitar, and the harp, there appears to be strong probability that the *Kinnor* (in the LXX *Kithara*) was of the lyre-type, while the *nebhel* (in Greek *psalterion*) was a harp. That is, the former was small, portable, having from three to six strings, a resonance-body at the base and cross-bar at the top, but without the long neck, finger-board, and sounding-board at the back characteristic of the guitar; while the latter was larger, with strings varying in number from six to sixteen, and it was held in one hand, whilst played upon with a plectrum in the other. The distinction thus marked becomes clear enough in later times, but was probably not discernible in the simpler instruments of a primitive age, and it would be a mistake to insist upon an exact modern rendering of each Hebrew word wherever it occurs.

3. The **new song** of which we often read in the O. T. frequently turns upon an old theme. In a sense the theme is always old—the goodness and mercy of God; but the subject may be either an entirely new instance of this, or former instances celebrated with new music and freshly grateful hearts.

In the second clause are two ideas, 'strike ye well the strings' refers to the music—the main feature; 'with joyful shouting'—this was of the nature of accompaniment.

4, 5. The first theme of praise is the moral character or attribute of Jehovah. Four words emphasize His righteousness and one His love. His word is 'upright'; His works are marked by **faithfulness.** He loves **righteousness** as a principle, and **judgement** its practical realization. The earth is full of His **lovingkindness.**

6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made;
And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.
7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap:
He layeth up the deeps in storehouses.
8 Let all the earth fear the LORD:
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
9 For he spake, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.

Thus thought and affection, speech and action, so far as these may be predicated of the Most High, are characterized by that perfect righteousness, which nowhere in the Hebrew conveys an idea of 'justice' as opposed to love, but like our 'equity' implies due and kindly consideration of all the facts of every case.

6. Here the Psalmist goes back to creation as supplying his first illustration. The emphasis laid upon the word of God in Gen. i is very marked: the phrase 'God said' is often repeated. The word for **breath** is the same as that for spirit in Gen. i. 3, but the ideas in the two cases are quite different. Here it corresponds to the spoken word, in Genesis the 'breath of God' broods as a dove and hovers with outspread wings over chaos to bring forth order and life and peace. The stress here lies upon the fact that a single spoken fiat of Jehovah is mighty enough to create all the host of heaven, the celestial orbs in all their grandeur and multitude.

7. The thought follows the creation-narrative, but makes it more definite. The 'gathering of waters' and the mention of **the deeps** belong to Gen. i, but the idea of the sea as **an heap** and of **storehouses** is later. These figures may be so construed as to be unpoetical, especially if we were to read with several ancient versions 'as in a bottle.' But, properly understood, both metaphors are apt and striking. The sea as seen from the land appears to swell into a mass, and, as we now know, is actually gathered into a mass by the attraction of the moon; while to the primitive mind the waters of ocean were, like the forces of the wind, gathered in unimaginable treasure-houses, out of which they were let loose from time to time by supernatural powers to perform great deeds, now of beneficence, now of destruction. Compare Jer. x. 13, 'He bringeth forth the wind out of his treasuries.'

8, 9. A continuation of the main thought, with its natural conclusion. One who could 'speak a world from nought' must surely be had in reverence by all His creatures. Render, **For** *He* **spake, and** (so) **it was:** a reference to the repeated 'and it was so' of Gen. i.

The LORD bringeth the counsel of the nations to nought: 10
He maketh the thoughts of the peoples to be of none effect.
The counsel of the LORD standeth fast for ever, 11
The thoughts of his heart to all generations.
Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; 12
The people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.
The LORD looketh from heaven; 13
He beholdeth all the sons of men;
From the place of his habitation he looketh forth 14
Upon all the inhabitants of the earth;
He that fashioneth the hearts of them all, 15
That considereth all their works.

10, 11. From creation the Psalmist passes to history. And here the strange phenomenon meets us of the creature rebelling against the Creator: whole nations and peoples with **counsel** and **thoughts** of their own opposed to those of their Maker. There can be no doubt, however, as to which are stable and which futile, which transient and which permanent. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts above man's, and His purposes cannot fail. For 'there is no wisdom nor counsel nor understanding against the Lord,' Prov. xxi. 30.

12. From a survey of history at large the Psalmist turns to that of the chosen people. But he does not here dwell in detail, as do other Psalmists, upon God's 'mighty works' in behalf of Israel; rather he fastens attention for a moment upon the fact that the Creator and Preserver of all has deigned to choose one nation for His own special possession. The natural inference comes later.

For the thought of this verse compare 'the song of Moses' in Deut. xxxiii, especially verses 26–29; and 2 Sam. vii. 23, 'What one nation in the earth is like thy people, even Israel,' &c.

13. The connexion of thought is that the God who thus graciously cares for Israel is He who 'all the earth surveys,' who holds all its inhabitants in the hollow of His hand.

14. Render, 'He gazeth'—a special word, illustrated by Jer. xxxii. 19, 'Whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men.'

15. Render, 'Even he who formeth the hearts of them all,
Who discerneth all their works.'

16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host:
A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.
17 An horse is a vain thing for safety:
Neither shall he deliver any by his great power.
18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him,
Upon them that hope in his mercy;
19 To deliver their soul from death,
And to keep them alive in famine.

He made and understands the nature of all, yet has deigned to bestow special care on Israel. But the word translated 'all' means literally 'together,' and conveys the idea of individual as well as universal knowledge.

16. It is as if the Psalmist were still following the thoughts of Deut. xxxiii, 'What people is like thee, O Israel?' Those who trust to great armies or valiant heroes are miserably disappointed. Some find an allusion here to Pharaoh and his host overwhelmed in the Red Sea, but this seems far-fetched, and similar expressions are found in lx. 11, 12 and elsewhere. The R. V. does not attempt to preserve the parallelism of the original, in which word corresponds to word—'the king' is not saved 'by the greatness of his army,' nor 'the hero by the greatness of his strength.' We have no reason to suppose that any special historical event is alluded to in either clause.

17. Israel did not usually employ war-horses, but in early times entrenched themselves in the hills of Canaan, and were at disadvantage when facing the chariots and horses of the Philistines and others in the plains. The Egyptian and Assyrian cavalry were very formidable, and the prophets denounced those who were disposed to rely on alliance with Egypt; see Isa. xxxi. 1, and compare Deut. xvii. 16, where the use of horses is distinctly discouraged. So 'the horse' came to represent earthly power and material resources, Ps. xx. 7, xxi. 31. For a picture of the war-horse and its 'great strength,' see the highly poetical and spirited description in Job xxxix. 19-25.

18, 19. A contrast is drawn between these vain grounds of confidence and the care which God exercises over those who trust Him. The phrase **them that fear him,** i. e. reverence and obey Him, is synonymous with **them that hope in his mercy.** These are content to hope, and have a right to hope, for a manifestation of His lovingkindness. Neither sword nor famine shall destroy them.

Our soul hath waited for the LORD: 20
He is our help and our shield.
For our heart shall rejoice in him, 21
Because we have trusted in his holy name.
Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, 22
According as we have hoped in thee.

A Psalm of David; when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed. **34**

I will bless the LORD at all times: 1

---

20. The last strophe. If the antiphonal arrangement was adopted in the previous couplets the whole choir would join in chanting these closing words of thanksgiving.

R. V. reads **hath waited**: perhaps better, 'waiteth patiently for Jehovah.' The spirit of the closing stanza implies that there was still need to tarry in hope. Further coincidence with Deut. xxxiii. 29 is found in the use of the words **help** and **shield** as applied to God.

21. his holy name: the manifestation of the Divine character, holiness implying the sum of all moral excellence. Compare Ps. xxx. 4.

22. A touching prayer, often embodied in liturgical use, as at the close of the *Te Deum* and in separate versicles. No plea is felt to be more availing than that the suppliant has waited and hoped and trusted. The Psalmist, like the prophet, is assured that 'they that wait for Jehovah shall not be ashamed,' Isa. xlix. 23.

PSALM XXXIV. JOY IN JEHOVAH AT ALL TIMES.

An acrostic Psalm, the couplets in regular order beginning with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet successively; except that *Vav* is omitted and an additional couplet is found at the end, beginning with *Pe*. In all these respects it corresponds with Ps. xxv.

According to the title, it was written by David at the time described in 1 Sam. xxi. 11, when he feigned madness at the court of the Philistine king. The king, however, is called in the history Achish, and various conjectures have been made to account for the name Abimelech in the title. The most plausible of these is that Abimelech, like Pharaoh, may have been the title of a dynasty, while Achish was a personal name. This, however, is pure conjecture, and the discrepancy does not strengthen our confidence in the trustworthiness of the titles, which on other grounds are seen to be of doubtful authority. Certainly we should not

His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD:
The meek shall hear thereof, and be glad.
3 O magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt his name together.
4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
5 They looked unto him, and were lightened:
And their faces shall never be confounded.

---

expect *a priori* that when in peril of his life amongst the Philistines David would write an acrostic poem, containing hardly any immediate allusion to his strange circumstances, and couched in a didactic style remarkably like the 'proverbs' of later centuries. Delitzsch thinks that the very variation of names points to an independent line of tradition, and suggests the Annals of David, one of the sources from which the Books of Samuel were compiled. It may be so; but all critical probability points to an error in the title.

There is, as might be expected in an acrostic, no clearly discernible outline of thought, but the Psalm divides itself naturally into two parts, verse 11 beginning a didactic strain, such as a teacher uses in addressing his disciples.

1. Hardly any phrase is more characteristic of the Psalter than the opening of this Psalm. It is the praise at *all* times which is difficult to compass, but which is so largely realized by the Psalmists as to make Bacon's contrast between 'hearse-like airs and carols' inappropriate. The language of this Psalm covers all kinds of experiences.

2. Meek is perhaps the best translation open to us for *'anavim*. But it inadequately conveys the idea of 'the quiet in the land,' who show their fortitude by patient trust in Jehovah when the main current of authority and influence sets full against them.

3. The language of these verses, inviting co-operation and united praise on the part of all those who fear Jehovah, is much more appropriate in (say) the period of the later Monarchy, or the Exile, than in the lips of David addressing his followers. To 'exalt the name of Jehovah' is to celebrate His glory in every way possible; as Delitzsch expresses it, 'to place God's exalted name as high in one's heart, in word, and in deed, as it is in itself.'

4–6. Three parallel statements are made in these three verses, which may be compared and contrasted. Experience is quoted—in the first instance **I**, &c., in the second **They**, &c., in the third

This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, 6
And saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them 7
that fear him,
And delivereth them.
O taste and see that the LORD is good: 8

'This afflicted man.' The modes of entreaty are (1) 'sought earnestly,' (2) looked, (3) cried. The relief given is described by the phrases (1) 'He heard and delivered'; (2) 'They were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed'; (3) 'Jehovah heard and saved him from his troubles.'

Doubtless the person in the first instance is the Psalmist. In the second 'they' should be understood impersonally: we have no word in English corresponding to the German *man* and the French *on*; or, as frequently in Hebrew, the subject may be supplied from the predicate itself—'They who looked, when they did so, were lightened.' In the third instance it has been supposed that 'this afflicted one' means the Psalmist, but it is much better to understand it as a particular example of a general principle, a case which has happened again and again.

The deliverance from fear, the brightening of the anxious countenance and banishing of disappointment or despair, and the complete salvation out of all straits and distresses, are proofs of Divine help in time of need which speak for themselves.

7. The angel of Jehovah mentioned in a number of passages in the O. T. must not be confounded with an ordinary single messenger of the heavenly host. In Gen. xvi, xxii; Exod. iii; Judges ii, v, vi, xiii, and other places, the phrase evidently indicates a special theophany or manifestation of the Divine presence. The being in question is identified with God, and exercises the prerogatives of God, yet he is distinct from God. In Isa. lxiii. 9 he is called 'the angel of His presence,' and the idea throughout seems to be that a special manifestation was granted to assure Israel that the fullness of the Divine presence and favour was with them. See Exod. xxiii. 20, xxxii. 34, and xxxiii. 14, 15. A careful reader will find in the language used, not an anticipation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, nor a distinction of persons within the Godhead, but a preparation for a fuller idea of Deity than the solitary God of Islam, a God who reveals Himself and communicates Himself, such a God as in the N. T. becomes incarnate.

For the notion of a Divine camp of deliverance compare Gen. xxxii. 2 and 2 Kings vi. 17.

8. The hortatory tone of verse 3 is resumed. The Psalmist

Blessed is the man that trusteth in him.
9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints:
For there is no want to them that fear him.
10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:
But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.
11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me:
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 What man is he that desireth life,
And loveth *many* days, that he may see good?

---

invites others to share his own happy experience. Taste and sight represent spiritual perception in its more intimate forms.

9. ye his saints: not, as often, those who have entered into covenant relation with God, but those who are in character holy, a phrase very unlikely to be found in the lips of David addressing the motley company whom he had gathered round him in the cave of Adullam.

10. young lions: a proverbial phrase for those best able to provide for themselves by strength and courage. The words of this verse were the last transcribed by Columba, the mediaeval saint and missionary, who said on the morning of his death that his Lord would call him ere midnight. In the afternoon he entered with one of his companions the wattled hut of the monastery and continued his transcription of the Psalms. When he reached this verse, he said, '"They shall not want any good thing"—that is a good place for me to stop. The next verse belongs to my successors.'

11. Render, 'Come, my sons, hearken to me'; the word **children** is ambiguous, and has been removed in R. V. from the passage in Proverbs which forms a close parallel with this. Not children in years are intended, but those who are prepared to listen to the speaker as a teacher, see Prov. v. 7, &c. The **fear of Jehovah** is often dwelt upon in the Book of Proverbs, where it is represented as the beginning of wisdom, the chief part of knowledge (i. 7 and ix. 10), the very foundation of sterling character.

12. The phrases of this verse are also characteristic of 'Proverbs,' e. g. **life** for that which is life indeed, Prov. viii. 35, and for long life, see Prov. iii. 2, x. 27. The exhortation of these verses is quoted at length in 1 Pet. iii. 10-12.

13. Another feature of similarity in the Psalmist's teaching with that of 'the wise' is the warning against sins of the tongue, Prov. xviii. 21, xxi. 23. Such counsel is needed at all times, but

Keep thy tongue from evil,
And thy lips from speaking guile.
Depart from evil, and do good;
Seek peace, and pursue it.
The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous,
And his ears are *open* unto their cry.
The face of the LORD is against them that do evil,
To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
The righteous cried, and the LORD heard,
And delivered them out of all their troubles.
The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart,

---

it would be strangely placed as an address of the persecuted David to his warrior companions. It belongs to another state of society and another type of teacher, such as the son of Sirach, and James in his Epistle.

14. Righteousness is enjoined, negatively in the avoidance of evil, positively in the practice of good; whilst **peace** is to be cultivated in the sense of a kindly disposition towards neighbours, as contrasted with the violence and fraud of which the Psalmists so often complain. That this will need effort and must be pursued is often suggested; compare Paul's 'as much as in you lieth,' Rom. xii. 18.

15, 16. Render,

The eyes of Jehovah are toward the righteous,
And his ears are toward their cry;

whilst His 'face is against' the evil-doers. In the passage of the Red Sea the pillar of fire and cloud propitiously guided Israel, but discomfited the Egyptians as the Lord 'looked forth' against them. For the perishing of the very remembrance of the wicked compare ix. 6.

17. As the text stands the translation should be 'They cried,' with the impersonal use of 'they' noted in verse 5. The LXX and Vulg., however, read 'The righteous cry,' both words beginning with *Tsade*, the characteristic letter of this verse. A transposition of verses 15 and 16 has been proposed, which however does not seem greatly to mend matters.

18. The afflicted ones of this verse are such as are often mentioned in the later Psalms and in Jeremiah, men who have passed through sorrow and learned its lessons. The words employed lie on the borderland between condition and character;

And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous:
But the LORD delivereth him out of them all.
20 He keepeth all his bones:
Not one of them is broken.
21 Evil shall slay the wicked:
And they that hate the righteous shall be condemned.
22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants:
And none of them that trust in him shall be condemned.

---

the **broken heart** and **contrite spirit** are crushed by sorrow, softened in penitence, and so prepared for better things. Compare Isa. lvii. 15, lxvi. 2.

19. The closing verses of the Psalm present a series of contrasts between the fate of the righteous and the wicked, cast in the antithetical form so familiar in the Book of Proverbs, illustrated also in Psalm i. This verse recognizes that the children of the kingdom must suffer tribulation, which is an advance upon more primitive ideas that good fortune always accompanies goodness. The providence of God is shown in their deliverance.

20. Preservation in calamity, followed by deliverance, is intended, not entire immunity from trouble. The **bones** may be strained and racked, but the life will be preserved. It is possible, though not probable, that this passage is quoted in John xix. 36, 'A bone of him shall not be broken.' The evangelist probably refers to Exod. xii. 46.

21, 22. The word for **slay** is a strong one, an intensive conjugation being used. The versions render, 'The death of the wicked is evil,' or 'most evil,' following perhaps a different reading; Delitzsch translates shall 'throttle,' 'the evil which he loved and cherished shall be the hangman's power to which he falls a prey.' But **evil** means rather the punishment which overtakes the wicked: whether it strangle, or drown, or stab, it is certain to be fatal, and terribly so.

The word translated in A. V. 'desolate,' in R. V. **condemned,** means to be pronounced guilty and treated as such. The A. V. sounds more picturesque and impressive in English, but it does not convey the meaning of the Hebrew. The R. V. is seen to be more impressive, as well as more accurate, when it is borne in mind that the sentence of the Judge of the whole earth is intended. An anticipation may be found here of that solemn and eternal parting to the right hand and the left of which Christ speaks in

A Psalm of David.

35
1 Strive thou, O LORD, with them that strive with me :
Fight thou against them that fight against me.

---

the parable of the sheep and the goats. Stern sentence is pronounced upon all those who love evil and hate the righteous, whilst a gracious acquittal and acceptance is accorded to those who take refuge in Jehovah. They will be preserved from condemnation and its dire consequences now and evermore.

PSALM XXXV. A PLEA AGAINST PERSECUTORS.

The position of the writer of this Psalm is obvious enough. He is surrounded by cruel enemies, from whose hands he had deserved better things. He is in danger of his life, and is firmly convinced that the success of the plots against him will be injurious to the cause of righteousness. It is not quite so clear, however, who these enemies are. Some have drawn the conclusion from verse 15 that foreigners were included amongst them, but this is very doubtful; see the note on that verse.

It is impossible from these data to decide the question of date and authorship. Opinions vary chiefly between David during Saul's persecution and an author of the time of Jeremiah; whilst modern critics who refuse to place any Psalms before the Exile assign this to the later Persian or Greek period. In favour of the Davidic authorship may be alleged (1) a general similarity of circumstances; (2) a coincidence of phraseology between verse 1 and 1 Sam. xxiv. 15, 'Jehovah be my judge and plead my cause,' &c.; and (3) the position of the Psalm in the First Book. But on this hypothesis the whole of David's complaint is directed against a number of persons, the description of whom in the Psalm hardly corresponds with such of Saul's counsellors or partisans as might be supposed to be intended, while there is no allusion to the one foe whose rage and envy were the fount and origin of the whole persecution. On the other hand, the number of coincidences between the language of this Psalm and the Book of Jeremiah is very large. The prophet may be in every case the borrower, but it is more natural to suppose that the parallels are due to a similarity in circumstances between the prophet and the Psalmist. The conditions of David's persecution by Saul were in reality very different. There is no reason to draw the date down to a period after the Exile.

On the apparently vindictive tone of verses 4-6, see the section on Imprecatory Psalms in vol. ii, also the notes on these verses below. The attempt to give them a Messianic application is theologically unsound as well as exegetically incorrect, whilst it is incredible that David should use such language in relation to Saul. The Psalm falls naturally into three parts. An appeal to Jehovah

2 Take hold of shield and buckler,
And stand up for mine help.
3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that pursue me:
Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.
4 Let them be ashamed and brought to dishonour that seek after my soul:

---

to do justice in the case of these cruel and evil men, verses 1–10; a description of their base ingratitude and prayer for deliverance, 11–18; renewed prayer, especially on the ground of the harm which their victory would do to the cause of right, 19–28. This strophe, like each of the preceding, ends with a protestation on the part of the Psalmist of his allegiance to Jehovah, and the thanksgivings he will offer if his prayer be heard.

1. Strive in this verse must be understood of a contest in a court of law; the parallel clause uses the figure of an actual fight on a battlefield. The coincidence in phraseology with 1 Sam. xxiv. 15 is not very remarkable, inasmuch as the idea of God's 'pleading the cause' of His servants is not uncommon, see 1 Sam. xxv. 39; Job x. 2; Isa. xlix. 25. It is still more usual to speak of God as the judge in such a cause, but the details of the figure here, as if God were only an advocate, are of course not to be pressed.

2, 3. The figure of the warrior is continued. Two kinds of **shield** are mentioned, see note on Ps. v. 12; also the **spear** which the Divine Champion is to draw out from its place in the stand of arms and use in defence of the suppliant. The spear (*chanith*) is to be distinguished from the javelin, which was thrown (Job xli. 29), and from the lance, a lighter weapon.

In the second clause the translation of A. V. and R. V., **stop the way,** is to be preferred to that of R. V. marg., which by a different pointing of the Hebrew introduces a mention of the 'battle-axe,' Heb. *sagar*, understood by some to correspond to the Persian 'sagaris' and the 'maul' or hammer mentioned in Jer. li. 20, but by Cheyne, after Horsley, as a short dagger or dirk. But as Baethgen urges, there is no mention elsewhere of a Hebrew weapon of this name, and though the ellipsis of the word 'way' is abrupt, the most probable interpretation is that of our versions. Thus in verse 1 the enemy are in pursuit, in 2 and 3 the armed Defender has arisen and blocked the way against them, while in verse 4 they are routed in utter confusion.

4. The Psalmist prays that this overthrow may be complete. He uses stern and relentless language, but is not animated by

Let them be turned back and confounded that devise
my hurt.
Let them be as chaff before the wind, 5
And the angel of the LORD driving *them* on.
Let their way be dark and slippery, 6
And the angel of the LORD pursuing them.
For without cause have they hid for me their net *in* a pit, 7
Without cause have they digged *a pit* for my soul.
Let destruction come upon him at unawares; 8
And let his net that he hath hid catch himself:

---

a personally vindictive spirit, as is clear from verses 12–14 and 19. It is the triumph of righteousness which he desires to see consummated, and he paints the picture of an army in retreat with the utmost force and vividness.

5, 6. The defeat here described is such as Joshua was enabled to win over the Gibeonites at Beth-horon, a pass noted in history for battles, and lending itself naturally to the headlong rout of a beaten foe. The figure of a thunderstorm such as aided Joshua (Joshua x. 11) seems, moreover, to be present before the imagination of the Psalmist. Compare Jer. xxiii. 12, 'as slippery places in the darkness.'

The mention of the **angel of Jehovah** makes these maledictions to be much more terrible than the mere description of overthrow would imply; in our ears it sounds like cursing pure and simple. Such language is defensible only on the supposition—which the Psalmist takes for granted—that his is the cause of righteousness and his enemies are the very representatives of evil. But even so, there is a note of ruthlessness in such imprecations as these when uttered against fellow men, which is foreign to the whole spirit of the New Testament.

7, 8. The figures change in the description of the attacks made by the Psalmist's enemies. They are here represented as laying snares and digging pitfalls that they may entrap him and take his life. The use in these verses of the singular number **him, he, himself,** does not point to an individual foe, the words must be understood collectively. This seems clear from the whole tenor of the Psalm; in some other cases the Psalmist undoubtedly has in view an individual, 'the head and front' of his assailants; here there is no such particularization. The Psalmist does not hesitate to retaliate in spirit and to invoke upon his adversaries retribution corresponding to their offences against him—'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' Let them suffer, as they would have made me

With destruction let him fall therein.
9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD:
It shall rejoice in his salvation.
10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee,
Which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him,
Yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?
11 Unrighteous witnesses rise up;
They ask me of things that I know not.
12 They reward me evil for good,
To the bereaving of my soul.

---

suffer, is a prayer from which the writers of the Psalms do not shrink.

9, 10. The closing strophe of the first stanza. It affords relief from the dark pictures which have filled the foregoing verses, as the Psalmist describes the pious joy with which he will celebrate his own deliverance. His **soul,** his inmost nature, and his **bones,** all the framework of his body, will rejoice. He knows, moreover, to whom his safety will be due, and his thanksgiving will take a form adopted by other rescued saints, from the time of the Exodus onwards, in the cry, **Who is like unto thee, Jehovah?** The Hebrew word *Micah* (= Micaiah) means 'Who is like Jehovah?' and a well-known example of this exclamation is found in Micah vii. 18.

The positive side of the deliverance, the salvation of 'the poor from him that spoileth him,' is pleasant to dwell upon, but it must not be forgotten that the complete overthrow of the spoiler was necessary if deliverance was to be effective.

11. The second portion of the Psalm provides abundant reason for the Psalmist's strong indignation and resentment. The present tenses—'Malicious witnesses rise up,' &c.—graphically describe the treacherous dealing which has taken place in the past and is still being carried on. Falsehood, base ingratitude, and inveterate malice have been manifested by his enemies. Such false accusations were made against David by Saul, against Jeremiah by the princes of the court, and against many a righteous sufferer under the Old Covenant. So, too, the phrase **They ask me of things that I know not** recalls the false witness against Stephen described in Acts vi. 13 and against Christ in Mark xiv. 56.

12. The present tense here is best understood literally. 'They are requiting me evil for good—bereavement to my soul!' A man

But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth : 13
I afflicted my soul with fasting ;
And my prayer returned into mine own bosom.
I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or my brother : 14
I bowed down mourning, as one that bewaileth his mother.

---

falsely accused, and without defender and helper, is worse than an orphan ; his very soul dwells in bitter loneliness. There is a close coincidence between the phrase used here and Saul's confession in 1 Sam. xxiv. 17 that he had ungratefully requited David's magnanimity, but the Psalmist still uses the plural number 'They,' which we can hardly understand David's doing if he were the author of the Psalm and referred to Saul.

13. How different had been the conduct of the Psalmist! He had prayed and fasted when his enemies were in trouble, desiring to do his utmost to help them.

The last clause of this verse, **my prayer returned into mine own bosom,** is obscure. Several different explanations have been given. (1) Ewald and Delitzsch—so also apparently A. V. and R. V.—understand that in the attitude of grief and supplication the head was bent over the breast, and the prayer as it were fell back into the bosom. (2) Kirkpatrick translates 'My prayer shall return,' i. e. shall not be unrewarded, but shall bring a blessing to the offerer. So substantially Cheyne ; who, however, would emend the text. Perhaps the best rendering is (3) 'My prayer—may it return into my bosom!' So Perowne, who comments, 'The prayer I offered for them is a prayer I might have offered for myself. So true a prayer was it, so full of love, that I could wish nothing more than that the blessings I asked for them should be vouchsafed to me.' This fits best with the context, which goes on to compare the Psalmist's sorrow for his enemies with the sympathy which friend feels for friend, or a son for his mother. The rendering may appear somewhat far-fetched, but if the Hebrew text be sound, some periphrasis is necessary to explain a phrase which is obscure through its brevity.

14. The outward signs of mourning are always conspicuous in the East. Unwashed face and garments of sackcloth, neglected hair and beard, drooping head, dejected mien and gait, are amongst the signs mentioned in such passages as Isa. lviii. 5 ; 2 Sam. xix. 24.

15 But when I halted they rejoiced, and gathered themselves
together:
The abjects gathered themselves together against me,
and I knew *it* not;
They did tear me, and ceased not:
16 Like the profane mockers in feasts,
They gnashed upon me with their teeth.
17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on?
Rescue my soul from their destructions,
My darling from the lions.
18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation:
I will praise thee among much people.

---

15. 'At my halting,' i. e. when my foot slipped and I was ready to fall, as in Ps. xxxviii. 16, 17. The second line runs literally, 'They gathered, smiting, and I knew it not.' The translation of A. V. and R. V., **abjects,** accepted by many interpreters, depends on a passive meaning of the word *nekim* = smitten, i. e. afflicted, wretched and worthless. An emendation of the text, accepted by Baethgen, Cheyne, and others, reads 'foreigners' instead of 'abjects.' This is suggested by the clause 'I knew not,' but is not borne out by the general drift of the Psalm. The simplest meaning is probably nearest the mark. Render, 'They gather together, smiting me unawares'; in their insidious attacks they stabbed him, as it were, in the back with calumnies, see verse 11.

In the last line 'They tear me' describes metaphorically the wounds inflicted by slanderous tongues—in our own idiom, 'tear a reputation to tatters.' This meaning supports the interpretation just given of the preceding clause.

16. *Lit.* 'like profane cake-jesters,' i. e. buffoons ready to indulge in any kind of ribald folly to secure a good meal. 'Vile sycophants' would be the corresponding modern phrase. Or we may render, 'After the fashion of profane parasites they gnash upon me with their teeth,' either grinning in malicious scorn or, like gluttons, greedy to devour.

17. My darling (marg. 'My only one'), i. e. my one only life, synonymous with 'soul' in the preceding clause. The description of the enemies as lions seems to explain the gnashing of teeth as an eagerness to devour or destroy.

18. The second portion of the Psalm ends, like the first (verse 9), with a declaration of the Psalmist's readiness to praise

Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice 19
over me:
Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without
a cause.
For they speak not peace: 20
But they devise deceitful words against them that are
quiet in the land.
Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me; 21
They said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.
Thou hast seen it, O LORD; keep not silence: 22
O Lord, be not far from me.

God and publish His glory in every way possible, if deliverance may but be vouchsafed him.

19. The third stanza does but renew the complaint, the petition and the promised thanksgiving of the former two. Indignation, however, is subsiding, and confidence in God is increasing.

To **wink with the eye,** *lit.* to 'bite the eyes,' i. e. suddenly to close them in contempt or derision, may be a sign of mischief, see Prov. vi. 13, or of exultation over the success of wicked plots. The latter is the meaning here.

They **that hate me without a cause:** this may be the clause quoted by Christ as from 'their law' in John xv. 25, or Ps. lxix. 4 may be referred to, or the allusion may be more general to many passages which describe the causeless hatred of the wicked for the innocent.

20. The fable of the wolf and the lamb illustrated. Those who themselves are anything but peaceable accuse 'the quiet in the land' of causing disturbance, and plot against their peace. The word 'quiet' in this sense occurs only here. It is synonymous with lowly—it is so rendered in the Syrian version—and denotes the humble righteous in contradistinction to the arrogant evil-doers.

21. The gesture of opening wide the mouth may indicate either (1) the gaping and gloating of malice over misfortune; or (2) contempt, as when lip and tongue are protruded in xxii. 7; Isa. lvii. 4. The former seems to be the meaning here; they cry 'We have seen it,' i. e. our desire is gratified by the spectacle of the sufferer's wretchedness. See also verse 25.

22. A fine turn to this taunting phrase of his enemies is given by the Psalmist's reverent faith. He cries, **Thou hast seen it, Jehovah:** prove therefore that Thou art neither blind nor dumb by the manifestation of Thy presence and the utterance of Thy

23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgement,
Even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.
24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness;
And let them not rejoice over me.
25 Let them not say in their heart, Aha, so would we have it:
Let them not say, We have swallowed him up.
26 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that rejoice at mine hurt:
Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me.
27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause:
Yea, let them say continually, The LORD be magnified,
Which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

---

voice. 'Thou God seest me' may be the terrified utterance of an awakened conscience, or the calm plea of an assured trust.

23, 24. 'Awake, yea, arouse thyself!' Such anthropomorphic expressions, when found in psalms and prophecies, can surely only mislead the unwary. The Psalmist does not imagine that God is asleep, but he longs and prays for a proof that there is indeed a God who judges in the earth. Only a clear conscience could prompt the petition to be judged according to the Divine righteousness.

25. *Lit.* 'Aha, our desire!' (R. V. marg.) i. e. what we longed for, now we have. The shameful delight which the wicked feel in the ruin of the righteous springs largely from an uneasy conscience. Such overthrow seems to show that God has not seen and will not judge.

26, 27. In contrast with the petition of verse 26, which is almost a repetition of verse 4, the Psalmist asks that those may be gratified who 'delight in my righteousness,' which, as R. V. marg. shows, is the literal form of the phrase **favour my righteous cause.** This prayer is the more likely to be granted, because the Psalmist is bold enough to say that Jehovah delights in his prosperity. If God is magnified, so will the righteous cause of the Psalmist be, and therefore he prays for the triumph of all who desire this consummation.

And my tongue shall talk of thy righteousness, 28
And of thy praise all the day long.

For the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David the servant of the LORD. 36

The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, 1

---

28. He himself, of course, will share this joy. Hence he once more announces that if the opportunity be granted to him he will gratefully use it to the uttermost, giving thanks for deliverance vouchsafed.

my tongue shall talk, &c. The word translated 'talk' is in i. 4 and elsewhere rendered 'meditate'—'speak musingly' (Cheyne). The line which divides thought from speech is soon crossed when the mind is delighted with its theme. The brimming cup readily overflows. In verse 18 God's praise was to be made known over a wide area, to many people; here it is to be celebrated unceasingly, 'all the day long.' Abundant gratitude will find abundant expression, Ps. cxlv. 7.

PSALM XXXVI. THE SINFULNESS OF SIN AND THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

The two parts into which this Psalm obviously falls—verses 1–4 and 5–12—are strongly contrasted, both in theme and style. The former describes the evil of evil, the latter the lovingkindness of God. The former part is rugged and obscure; in the latter the diction is clear, melodious, and beautiful. The transition, moreover, is not effected gradually and naturally, but with an abruptness which has naturally led to the supposition that parts of originally separate Psalms are here united. This is a probable, but not a necessary, hypothesis. As Prof. Kirkpatrick says, the two parts may be 'related like the two members of an antithetic proverb, and the reader left to interpret the connexion for himself.' And it may be, as others have suggested, that the Psalmist's style varies with the varying theme, and labours in the attempt to set forth the tangled obscurities of the wicked man's thoughts, while it soars easily in delighted meditation upon the Divine love and goodness. Still, the two halves of an antithetic proverb are not distinguished in style and phraseology as are these verses; nor can it be taken as inherently probable that a crabbed style would be adopted in describing evil and a smoother flow of words in praising God. If portions of Psalms have often been blended, and if internal evidence is to guide us, it would appear that one example of such combination is before us. It is not pretended, however, that such reasoning is conclusive, the Psalm may well now be studied as a whole. The two parts are easily connected in thought, and

There is no fear of God before his eyes.
2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes,
That his iniquity shall not be found out and be hated.

---

no one can deny that the effect of the description, both of the wickedness of the wicked and the goodness of God, is heightened by the close juxtaposition of such sharply contrasted strains.

The title describes David as 'the servant of Jehovah,' and some have found a reference to the phrase 'his servant' in xxxv. 27. But the date is probably much later than the time of David; the state of society described would suggest rather the period of the later Monarchy.

1. Two translations of the first line are possible, according to whether the Massoretic text be closely adhered to or not. If it is, **The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart** means that the Psalmist is able to penetrate into the motives and hidden springs of the wicked man's actions, and trace all to an utter lack of religion and godly fear. This, however, is strained and unsatisfactory. A more literal translation, together with the adoption of a various reading found in several versions and noted in R. V. marg., would give us, 'The transgression of the wicked uttereth its oracle within his heart.' But what is 'sin's oracle,' and what does it say? The second line may be viewed either as containing the substance of this oracle, or as a comment of the Psalmist upon the statement of the first line. The peculiarity lies in the use of a sacred word like *neum*, reserved for specially solemn and oracular utterances of Jehovah, to describe the guilty whispers of sin in the wicked man's heart. The irony is bold, but not unparalleled. Olshausen's suggested emendation, accepted by Cheyne, to supply as in xiv. 1 the clause 'that there is no God,' as the declaration of this dark oracle, may be accepted as giving the meaning, which, however, is more forcibly expressed by the ellipsis implied in the text as we have it. Sin is the inspiring deity which directs the inmost thoughts of the wicked man; it breathes its own foul secrets into his inner ear—a kind of parody of the sacred message given from time to time by God to His servants, the 'Black Mass' of an apostate priest. Hence, adds the Psalmist, no wonder that all reverence for God and Divine things is absent from such a shrine.

2. Another obscure verse. What is the subject to 'flattereth'—God, transgression, or the man himself? R. V. text implies the last, the two other alternatives are given in the margin. Perowne and Cheyne amongst English expositors understand 'God flatters,' or deals smoothly with the wicked. But both the usage of the word and the context are against this. If 'my heart' be retained in verse 1, as in A.V. and R.V., the wicked man must be understood

The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: 3
He hath left off to be wise *and* to do good.
He deviseth iniquity upon his bed; 4
He setteth himself in a way that is not good;
He abhorreth not evil.

Thy lovingkindness, O LORD, is in the heavens; 5
Thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the skies.

---

as flattering himself, the Psalmist thus carrying on his analysis of the wicked man's ideas and motives. But if, with the best interpreters, 'his heart' be read in verse 1, we should render, 'For it (transgression) flattereth him in his eyes, that his iniquity shall not be found out and be hated.' The whole passage then furnishes a striking statement of the deceitfulness of sin. It whispers in low mysterious tones within the soul, as if it were a revelation from another world, that there is no need to be afraid of a God who, if He exists, takes little notice of transgression; and it casts a glamour over the eyes, persuading the man that none shall ever discover and draw attention to the hateful thing.

3, 4. If these are the thoughts of a man's heart, it is easy to guess what his words and deeds will be. They are now described in five clauses. (1) His words are false and evil; (2) negatively, he gives up all wise and beneficent action such as used to be his; (3) positively, he plans evil devices in hours of meditation; (4) he carries out these plans systematically, so that evil becomes the habit of his life; and (5) worst of all—though many might not think it so—the end is that the evil becomes a part of the man himself, and excites in him none of that loathing and detestation which the pure heart and tender conscience ever entertain for it. With this description may be compared that of Ps. i. 1 and many passages of Proverbs, e. g. ii. 12–15. In spite of some obscurities, there are few passages in the O. T. which so searchingly analyse and so impressively portray the corruption of the inner nature, and the outward life of the man who casts off the fear of God as a ruling principle of life.

5. With rapid flight, like a bird released from some foul earthly cage or entangling nets and nooses, the Psalmist rises skywards. There, in the heavens and beyond them, in the skies and above them, are the **lovingkindness** and the **faithfulness** of God—twin qualities which assure to all who trust in Him that He will fulfil His promises and that these are full of grace and comfort. The mention of the skies is intended here, as in Ps. ciii. 11; Isa. lv. 9, to indicate the infinite, immeasurable character of Divine truth and love.

6 Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Thy judgements are a great deep:
O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.
7 How precious is thy lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge under the shadow
of thy wings.
8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of
thy house;
And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy
pleasures.

---

6. For an illustration of other attributes the Psalmist turns to earth and the sublimest objects of nature around—the mountains and the ocean. **Righteousness** is that absolutely just and equitable character which leads to **judgements** or righteous acts. The latter are not to be considered only in our modern sense of the word 'judgement,' as visitations of wrath, though these are included. The **mountains of God**—compare 'trees of God,' civ. 16, and 'river of God,' lxv. 9—are the very symbol of lofty stability and majestic security; the great deep is profound, mysterious, all-encompassing. In both features of the landscape are found elements which take us beyond ourselves, which we cannot measure and fathom, but which we recognize as helping to constitute the great, beneficent order in which we live. The last line of this verse might seem to present an anti-climax. But the clause **thou preservest man and beast** serves to show how the very greatness and glory of the Divine attributes are pledged to what might seem the humble task of securing the safety and happiness of God's creatures, even the meanest of them. This thought forms a natural transition to the next verse.

7. Two or three slight changes in R.V. form a decided improvement on A. V. in this verse. 'Excellent' is replaced by **precious,** for the Psalmist wishes to show the value of the treasure thus placed at the disposal of men. **And** is better than 'Therefore'; the second clause is not a deduction from the first, but an explicative addition to it. **Take refuge** is better than 'put their trust': and it would have been well if the force of the phrase **the children of men**, *frail and mortal as they are,* could have been brought out, for the Hebrew implies this.

8. A still stronger and fuller statement of the joys of spiritual communion, under the figure of God as Host receiving His worshippers in His temple and regaling them with the *Shelamim,* the

For with thee is the fountain of life:
In thy light shall we see light. 9
O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; 10
And thy righteousness to the upright in heart.
Let not the foot of pride come against me, 11
And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

---

peace-offerings or sacrificial meal, which in all Semitic religions symbolized the Divine favour and bounty (Lev. vii. 15).

Render :—

'They are satisfied from the rich provision of thy house;
And of the river of thy delights dost thou make them drink.'

9. A still more lofty spiritual utterance, one of the most sublime in the O. T. In the combined simplicity of the words and profundity of the thought we are reminded of St. John, as indeed two of his favourite and often repeated words, **life** and **light**, are the key-words of this verse. Jeremiah (ii. 13) uses a similar phrase, 'fountain of living waters,' and contrasts it with men's 'broken cisterns,' just as in ch. xvii he describes not only the fruitfulness of the tree planted by the waters, as is done in Ps. i, but also the dryness and barrenness of the man who is as the heath in the desert.

Light furnishes the purest and brightest of all metaphors in man's attempt to set forth the blessedness of the beatific vision; hence its frequent use in Dante's Paradise. But as St. John emphasizes the fact that the man who walks in light, or purity, holds fellowship with God, so the Psalmist shows that by fellowship with God men are to realize all the purity and joy of which the present life is capable. The pellucid simplicity of these great words makes all comment mean and futile.

10. In the closing stanza the Psalmist applies to his own condition the great truths on which he has been meditating, and prays that God will manifest His attributes of **lovingkindness** and **righteousness** so as to help himself and others who, in spite of wickedness in high places, are striving to be faithful. No man could write the preceding verses who had not himself experienced God's goodness, so his prayer is that God would **continue** His grace sufficiently to enable His saints to triumph.

11. The **foot of pride** implies that the wicked were in power, and likely to trample with the heel of oppression. **Let not the hand . . . drive me away** implies that they had the power to banish the Psalmist from his home, perhaps from his country. The literal meaning of the word is 'make to wander,' and it is used of Israel's exile in 2 Kings xxi. 8. But the oppression here

12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen:
They are thrust down, and shall not be able to rise.

37 *A Psalm* of David.

1 Fret not thyself because of evil-doers,

---

referred to seems to be that of private persons who 'covet houses and take them away,' Mic. ii. 2; who 'join house to house, till there be no room,' Isa. v. 8.

12. An abrupt transition, intelligible only to those who are able to take a sudden leap of faith. The Psalmist sees his prayer already more than answered. The perfect tenses show the evil-doers as already **fallen** and **thrust down**; whilst the graphic word **There** points as with outstretched finger to an already visible overthrow. One step more is taken in the last clause, 'and they cannot rise.' No resurrection is possible for those whom the God of righteous love overthrows, when He answers the prayers of His saints and thrusts down the powers of darkness for ever. So the song shall be sung in the land of Judah, concerning all its oppressors, 'They are dead, they shall not live; they are shades, they shall not rise,' Isa. xxvi. 14.

Psalm XXXVII. Waiting for Jehovah.

A didactic Psalm, akin in thought and style to portions of the Book of Proverbs, and showing points of connexion with Pss. i. and lxxiii. It is alphabetic in structure, each stanza consisting for the most part of four lines—occasionally of three or five—and each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in regular succession. The subject is Providence, a vindication of the ways of God to man in respect of the prosperity of the wicked and the trials of the righteous. This great, wellnigh perennial, question receives various treatment in the O. T., and a progress of thought in relation to it can without much difficulty be discerned. For fuller treatment of the subject see vol. ii, Introduction. Here it may be said that at one stage of the history, what may be accounted as 'orthodox' Hebrew doctrine on the matter—that sooner or later in this life wickedness will be adequately punished and godliness rewarded—had not been seriously questioned. The Book of Job, however, represents a notable epoch in the history of O. T. theology on this head, presenting as it does a powerful and searching indictment of the prevailing view, and giving an answer, or answers, of its own to the ever-recurring question, Why do the righteous suffer?

The writer of this Psalm had evidently been tempted to doubt the justice and goodness of God, as he saw the comparative prosperity of men who made no pretension to religion, or even to

Neither be thou envious against them that work unrighteousness.

For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, 2
And wither as the green herb.

Trust in the LORD, and do good; 3

---

ordinary morality. But the mental disturbance had not been very deep, and he quiets his own soul and those of his readers by the counsel to wait patiently for a while and the balance will ere long be redressed. It is to be remembered that, in the absence of any clear revelation concerning a future life, no relief could be obtained by an appeal to a great Day of Assize when final rewards and punishments shall be awarded according to a perfect law of righteousness. But the Psalmist believes that such righteous adjudication will take place in this life, and sin be visited either upon the wicked himself, or his posterity, or both. He enjoins therefore a pious attitude of reverent waiting for the Lord's time, and resting in Him as One whose moral government cannot fail, however little His ways are at present understood.

No regular progress of thought is discernible in this acrostic poem, though commentators have found a fourfold division, each part consisting of about ten verses; the first containing positive counsel 1–11, the second describing the doom that shall overtake the wicked 12–22, the third dwelling more on the reward to be given to the righteous 21–31, the fourth pointing out the final nature of retribution when it does come 32–40.

The nearest approach to fixing a date that can be made is to assign the Psalm to the later period of the Monarchy, as expressing the wisdom of 'the wise men' who taught and wrote about the time of Hezekiah.

1, 2. The excellent translation **Fret not thyself** represents a phrase which means literally 'make not thyself hot' (in anger) 'against evil-doers.' The temptation is either to blaze forth in indignation or sullenly chafe and 'fret' at the moral inequalities of life. In this case the latter is apparently intended. The Psalmist addresses those who had no power themselves to act, and were more likely to 'be envious'—*lit.* to glow with dull red heat—'of the workers of unrighteousness' in their ill-deserved success.

The first verse is repeated almost exactly in Prov. xxiv. 19, but the figure in the sequel is different. There the wise man says, 'The lamp of the wicked shall be put out'; here the Psalmist says he shall speedily perish like the grass. The whole Psalm is but an amplification of this opening quatrain.

3, 4. R.V. text and margin show that in this stanza, while

Dwell in the land, and follow after faithfulness.
4 Delight thyself also in the LORD;
And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.
5 Commit thy way unto the LORD;
Trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.
6 And he shall make thy righteousness to go forth as the light,

---

there is no doubt about the meaning of the first and fourth lines, the second and third may be rendered either as imperatives or as futures, either as precepts or descriptions of the blessing which obedience will bring. The Revisers are undoubtedly right in rendering both clauses in verse 3 as imperatives—**Trust** and **Dwell**; but there is much to be said for understanding both the clauses of verse 4 as promises:—

'So shalt thou find thy delight in Jehovah;
And he shall give thee the petitions of thine heart.'

The positive cure for the disease of envy and impatience is inward trust and outward obedience; so far verse 3 is clear. In the latter part of the verse it is true that 'dwelling in the land' is usually (as in A. V.) regarded as a promise granted to the faithful. But the imperatives in both clauses can hardly be understood as futures, and the command must be understood as enjoining steady persistence in duty in the place where duty lies, like the prophet's assurance that those who believe 'shall not make haste' or be lightly disturbed.

Then, says the Psalmist, thou shalt find true happiness and satisfaction (1) in the presence and favour of Jehovah Himself; (2) in the lot and condition which He will grant in answer to prayer and in acknowledgement of loyal service.

5, 6. Commit, *lit.* 'Roll thy way upon Jehovah' (R. V. marg.); i. e. put off upon Him the burden of life, the anxiety which its problems cause and the load of care concerning its issues. For the figure of 'casting care' compare 1 Pet. v. 7. **He shall bring it to pass,** *lit.* 'He will do'—no object being specified, the meaning being 'all that is necessary.' Or more simply—Do thou trust, and He will act.

The object may be supplied from verse 6, the making manifest of the Psalmist's righteousness and the vindicating of the cause of truth being the object which he had most at heart. A fine description of the shining forth of righteousness after temporary obscuration is put into the mouth of Zophar, Job xi. 15-19, especially in verse 17, 'A day brighter than noon shall arise, and the very darkness be as the dawn of day.'

And thy judgement as the noonday.
Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: 7
Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way,
Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.
Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: 8
Fret not thyself, *it tendeth* only to evil-doing.
For evil-doers shall be cut off: 9
But those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the land.
For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: 10
Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and he shall not be.

---

7. The stanza of *Daleth* has only three lines, and the variety gives relief. **Rest in the LORD,** *lit.* 'Be silent to Jehovah,' P.B.V. 'Hold thee still in the Lord.' The silence and patience here enjoined clearly imply passiveness only so far as the injurious action of 'fretting' is concerned. Thus to 'hush the soul as a weaned child' (Ps. cxxxi) is no easy task. It is not mere resignation, quiet waiting—the root implies being 'on the stretch'—it needs an effort of great spiritual strength. The repetition of the phrases found in the first verse is not mere tautology, the reiteration gives emphasis such as the subject needs. A large part of the power of the Psalm lies in the quiet but persistent pressing home of one idea.

8, 9. Here the false and foolish character of the anger is made plain. The A.V. misses the meaning in the second clause of verse 8; R.V., by supplying 'it tendeth,' brings out the Psalmist's meaning. It is very tersely expressed, but may be paraphrased—'Allow not thyself in what may seem to be hot indignation against unrighteousness, it leads only to unrighteousness itself in the end.' Wesley said that fretting is as bad as swearing.

9. It is doubtful whether in this verse and the four others mentioned in R.V. marg. we should render **inherit the land** or 'the earth.' The former gives more exactly the thought of the Psalmist, the latter gives a fuller meaning and links the Psalm with the New Testament. Verse 3 shows that the land of Canaan as the land of promise is meant in the first instance.

10, 11. A stronger statement of both sides of the contrast. The 'cutting off' of the wicked is expanded into the statement that they shall be swept away till no trace of them be left, while on the other hand a fuller promise is given to the righteous.

11 But the meek shall inherit the land;
And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
12 The wicked plotteth against the just,
And gnasheth upon him with his teeth.
13 The Lord shall laugh at him:
For he seeth that his day is coming.
14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow;
To cast down the poor and needy,
To slay such as be upright in the way:
15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart,
And their bows shall be broken.

'They that wait on Jehovah' is changed into **the meek,** those who are 'quiet in the land,' xxxv. 20. These shall not only occupy the land which is their inheritance by right of obedience, but peace and prosperity shall abound to them. The Lord Jesus Christ uses the former part of verse 11 in the third beatitude, Matt. v. 5, but both the moral quality of meekness and the inheritance promised are spiritualized and deepened in the N. T. utterance.

12, 13. For the phrase **gnasheth upon him with his teeth,** see xxxv. 16. The fury of determined malice, of the wild beast only waiting for the moment to spring, is here intended. The superior might of Jehovah, who scorns this display of impotent rage and sees imminent the destruction of the would-be destroyer, is very striking. For the phrase **his day** compare 'his day shall come to die,' 1 Sam. xxvi. 10, and 'the day of Jerusalem,' Ps. cxxxvii. 7, i. e. the day of its calamity and overthrow.

14, 15. Similar plotting and preparation of mischief is described, to be followed by similar intervention and retribution. The poor and needy may sometimes have been in danger of actual violence from **sword** and **bow,** but the drawing of the sword and bending of the bow are phrases constantly used in the Psalms to represent metaphorically injury of all kinds.

upright in the way is not quite the meaning here. The Hebrew says, 'the upright of way,' a phrase accurately rendered in A. V. 'such as be of upright conversation,' i. e. conduct a mode of life. Verse 15 shows in what form the judgement prophesied in verse 13 will come: the wild beast shall be himself devoured, the archer shot through with his own dart.

Better is a little that the righteous hath 16
Than the abundance of many wicked.
For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: 17
But the LORD upholdeth the righteous.
The LORD knoweth the days of the perfect: 18
And their inheritance shall be for ever.
They shall not be ashamed in the time of evil: 19
And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
But the wicked shall perish, 20
And the enemies of the LORD shall be as the excellency
of the pastures:
They shall consume; in smoke shall they consume away.

16, 17. Another of the many close parallels with Proverbs is observable here. Compare verse 16 with Prov. xv. 16 and xvi. 8. It is not easy to render the word *hāmōn*, translated in R. V. **abundance.** It means properly noise, as of a crowd, or a rush of waters, and 'suggests the idea of noisy, ostentatious opulence' (Kirkpatrick). The bluster of ostentation is feeble indeed when the power which lay behind it is broken. 'He whose arms are broken can neither harm others nor help himself' (Delitzsch). The strength of the righteous, on the other hand, lies in the might of Jehovah who 'upholds' him. The 'arms of his hands are made strong by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,' Gen. xlix. 24.

18, 19. knoweth the days recalls the phraseology of i. 6. The knowledge here referred to includes the watchful care of Providential love. It may mean the days individually, and correspond to the 'numbering of the hairs' in the N. T., i. e. Jehovah watches the minutest detail of the lives of His servants; or, more generally, He cares for them to the end of life. The **inheritance** is that 'of the land' so often referred to in this Psalm, and it is retained **for ever,** because handed on from generation to generation of posterity. Not bare possession is promised, but abundant supply, so that in **the days of famine,** which in so many Eastern countries are far from being either rare or nominal, the righteous shall lack nothing.

20. The stanza of *Caph* contains only three lines, and makes another artistic break in the regular succession of couplets.

But, more correctly 'For'; 'on the contrary' being understood. The Syriac, Targum, and other versions, including A. V., render 'as the fat of lambs,' a translation suggested perhaps by the

21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again:
But the righteous dealeth graciously, and giveth.
22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the land;
And they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.
23 A man's goings are established of the LORD;
And he delighteth in his way.
24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down:
For the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

---

mention of smoke, as of sacrifice, in the latter part of the verse. This is now, however, almost universally abandoned in favour of 'the beauty of the meadows,' the somewhat unusual meaning of 'meadow' or 'pasture' being established by the use of the word in Ps. lxv. 14 and Isa. xxx. 23. The fading of the flower and the vanishing of the smoke are figures of transience common to Homer and the Psalter and early poetry in general. It is a mistake to join these two figures together, as if the smoke referred to were that of dried grass burning, any more than that of lambs sacrificed.

21, 22. The close connexion of these two verses shows that in the former it is the poverty of the wicked and the increasing wealth of the righteous which is described. **The wicked borroweth and payeth not again,** because he is unable, not because he is a rogue. In the second half of verse 21 render, 'The righteous dealeth generously'; A.V. is misleading in its translation 'showeth mercy.' The kindly use which the good man makes of his substance is here a secondary thought, the primary one is that he has abundance to give away. The promise concerning inheriting the land is repeated here: some commentators make of it a kind of refrain, marking off separate sections of the Psalm.

23, 24. The emphasis here should be observed. 'It is from Jehovah that a man's steps are established,' i.e. his feet made strong to walk firmly and steadily. The word used warrants the gloss of A.V., 'a good man,' though it is better not to introduce it into a translation. In the second line render, 'And in his way doth He take delight.' The whole of the context favours the meaning that God is pleased with the good man's life, rather than that the good man delights to walk according to God's precepts. But analogies may be found in the Psalms and Proverbs for both interpretations. The thought throughout this quatrain is that the life of a good man viewed as a journey is one of steadfast progress, even in spite of stumbles, because God is well pleased with him and supports him throughout.

I have been young, and now am old; 25
Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,
Nor his seed begging *their* bread.
All the day long he dealeth graciously, and lendeth; 26
And his seed is blessed.
Depart from evil, and do good; 27
And dwell for evermore.
For the LORD loveth judgement, 28
And forsaketh not his saints;
They are preserved for ever:

25, 26. This utterance of personal experience must be interpreted reasonably. The Psalmist renders his testimony to the general rule that neither the righteous in their own lives nor their families are found in utter and permanent destitution. That they have to suffer privations is, so to speak, a part of his hypothesis, which appears in every mention of 'the afflicted.' The drift of the verse is similar to the appeal of the son of Sirach, 'Look at the generations of old and see: who did ever put his trust in the Lord and was ashamed?' Ecclus. ii. 10.

In verse 26 the emphasis is again to be laid on the fact that the righteous man possesses enough and to spare, but the generosity of his character is perhaps more prominent than in verse 21. The continuity of the generations, for good or for evil, is constantly noted in this Psalm. The doctrine of heredity in this sense was a part of the Hebrew 'orthodoxy' mentioned in the introduction above.

27. The often repeated proverbial precept, **Depart from evil,** &c., is followed by an imperative, **And dwell for evermore.** But the 'And,' as often in Hebrew, is equivalent to 'And so,' which gives to the command the effect of a promise, 'Thou shalt dwell.' It is better, however, as in verse 3, to translate literally and understand that the righteous man is bidden to do his duty as a citizen, and hold his ground as a faithful servant and representative of Jehovah in the land.

In verse 28 **saints** means those who are bound by covenant-ties to Jehovah and are faithful to their allegiance. This verse should end with the word 'saints': the stanza of *Ayin* consists of the quatrain made up of the latter half of verses 28 and 29, which we now proceed to consider.

28, 29. The clause **They are preserved for ever** does not, according to the received text, begin with *Ayin*, though by a slight and perhaps permissible elision of the first letter it may be made to

But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.
29 The righteous shall inherit the land,
And dwell therein for ever.
30 The mouth of the righteous talketh of wisdom,
And his tongue speaketh judgement.
31 The law of his God is in his heart;
None of his steps shall slide.
32 The wicked watcheth the righteous,
And seeketh to slay him.
33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand,
Nor condemn him when he is judged.

---

do so. But then neither in meaning nor connexion does the line fit into its place, and most modern commentators incline to follow the reading of the LXX and render:—

'The unrighteous are destroyed for ever:
And the seed of the wicked are cut off,'

thus preserving the parallelism and the contrast with the two statements concerning the righteous in the former half of verses 28 and 29. Again, in our verse 29 occurs the 'refrain' concerning the inheritance of the righteous. It is rather, however, a reiterated aphorism than a poetical refrain.

30, 31. Stanza of *Pe*, devoted wholly to the righteous, and dealing with his inner life rather than his outward condition. Words are mentioned before thoughts, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The close connexion between thought and speech is hinted at in the two words used in verse 30, the former meaning to 'talk musingly' (xxxv. 28) and the latter sometimes meaning to think, as well as to speak. The explanation of Deut. vi. 7, 'Thou shalt talk of these words when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way,' &c., is found in the previous verse, 'They shall be in thine heart.' A close parallel is found here. Both words and steps, i. e. the details of conduct, are rightly ordered, because God's law is loved.

32, 33. The reference in both these verses seems to be to unjust earthly judgement. The form of oppression is not that of open violence, but unfair use of power and authority. The wicked man seeks for opportunities of unjust accusation, that he may press his advantage to the utmost, even to the taking away of life. But 'one higher than the high regardeth; and there be higher than they'—as the Preacher says concerning men who 'take away judgement and justice in a province,' Eccles. v. 8. The

Wait on the LORD, and keep his way,
And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land:
When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.
I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil.
But one passed by, and, lo, he was not:
Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.
Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright:
For the latter end of *that* man is peace.
As for transgressors, they shall be destroyed together:
The latter end of the wicked shall be cut off.

Judge of all will not suffer this perversion of justice, and His acquittal will secure release.

34. Another stanza of three lines. The repeated exhortations of this Psalm exhibit the didactic style characteristic of Proverbs, and found in a few Psalms. In this instance **his way** means, of course, the way of Jehovah, not as in verse 23. The prospect of seeing the overthrow of the wicked is not a matter of personal gratification, but it is held out as additional evidence of the whole thesis of the Psalm. Justice shall be done on earth, and the oppressed saints shall witness its triumph.

35, 36. Another personal testimony drawn from the Psalmist's own experience. He has seen happen that which he declares to be only an illustration of a universal law.

in great power is a somewhat tame translation of a strong expression. Render, 'I saw the wicked striking terror,' the whole scene being rendered more graphic by the preterite tense, And **one** (*or*, I) **passed by, and, lo, he was not.** Compare the use of the aorist in Jas. i. 11, where the description gains in vividness by being represented as a concrete fact in the past. The comparison to **a green tree in its native soil,** rooted as if it formed part of the landscape, points to the security of the tyrant, the apparent impossibility of shaking his power. Yet he vanished utterly. The LXX and other versions read, 'I passed by,' probably the correct reading.

37, 38. This stanza bids us contemplate the final issues of the 'two ways,' which have been described at length in the Psalm.

There is doubt about the meaning of the word *acharith* used in the latter clauses of verses 37 and 38. It is translated in A. V. 'end,' in R. V. **latter end:** while the margin gives 'reward,' or 'future,' or 'posterity.' Most of the best expositors adopt the last

39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD:
He is their strong hold in the time of trouble.
40 And the LORD helpeth them, and rescueth them:
He rescueth them from the wicked, and saveth them,
Because they have taken refuge in him.

38 A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.
1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath:

---

meaning and render in verse 37, 'There is a posterity to the man of peace.' This rendering is certainly the easier in verse 38, but there is much to be said on the other side. The word is very seldom used of 'posterity,' Ps. cix. 13 being perhaps the best of some four instances adduced and itself by no means certain. The fundamental idea is not concrete but abstract, that of a 'sequel,' 'that which cometh after'; the notion of a final happy close to life, granted to the righteous, withheld from the wicked, seems to give the best meaning. Compare Prov. xxiii. 18, where there is similar ambiguity, and Ps. lxxiii. 17, which tells in favour of this rendering. It is not to be denied, however, that the mention of a 'latter end' leads naturally to the thought of posterity, that this *may* be intended here, as the best interpreters think it is, and the idea is quite in harmony with the teaching of the Psalm. Kirkpatrick says, 'To the Israelite, with his strong sense of the continuity of life in the family, childlessness or the loss of posterity was a virtual annihilation.' But the P. B. V. gives the meaning very simply, 'that shall bring a man peace at the last.'

39, 40. The opening word in this stanza does not actually begin with *Tav*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, but it virtually does so, the opening conjunction, represented by a single letter, being disregarded. The close of the Psalm is peaceful, as becomes its general character. This last stanza sets forth God as a source of safety, as a stronghold or shelter in which men may hide, as a helper in distress and a deliverer from danger and oppression. Those who believe in this may surely rest in Jehovah and wait patiently for Him: and when they have waited, wait.

PSALM XXXVIII. A SUFFERER'S PENITENTIAL PLEA.

The third of the 'Penitential Psalms.' Delitzsch holds that the first four of these are by David, and form a chronological series describing his repentance for his great sin in the matter of Bath-sheba and Uriah, to be read in this order—Pss. vi, xxxviii, li, xxxii. On the other hand, the parallels with passages in Jeremiah are too close to be accidental, and many assign the Psalm to that

Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

prophet, or at least to his period. Cheyne says 'the speaker represents suffering Israel, who, though following after good, cannot be sinless before God.'

It seems clear in any case (1) that bodily sickness forms one element in the suffering. It is true that the strong expressions of verses 5–8 have been understood metaphorically, just as the prophets from time to time describe the moral corruption of Israel as disease. But it is simpler and sounder exegesis to take the obvious meaning. If this be done, it renders the Davidic origin less probable. But (2) trouble of mind and of circumstances is also included. The sufferer is deserted by his friends, verse 11, and hunted by his enemies, verse 12. And (3) these afflictions are recognized as a part of the punishment of sin. Conscience is troubled. A distinction must constantly be made between Psalms in which the plea for help is urged because the Psalmist is faithful to his religious allegiance and those in which sin is freely confessed, verse 18. And once again (4) the plaintive element predominates. This is not to be described as a gloomy Psalm, but the suppliant pleads for forgiveness, he does not enjoy it. Indeed, it is only towards the close that hope dawns, more through a consideration of what God is in Himself than the Psalmist's personal realization of His goodness.

Under all these circumstances the Davidic origin seems improbable. But we have not data enough to enable us to fix the date precisely, while the period of Jeremiah is in many respects very suitable. The words may be read as David's confession, or Jeremiah's prayer, or Israel's plea in her humiliation, or as a Psalm in the Anglican service for Ash Wednesday, or they may be appropriately used by any sufferer who would confess his sins and plead for mercy. The Psalmist, whoever he was, speaks for humanity, so long as it sins and suffers.

The Psalm readily divides itself into three parts: verses 1–8, a description of personal pain within; 9–14, the aggravation caused by alienation and persecution without; 15–22, prayers for help and deliverance.

For the title 'to bring to remembrance,' see Introd. p. 17. The view generally taken of this expression, as in R. V. marg., is that it indicates a liturgical use of the Psalm, 'to make memorial' (Heb. *azkara*) being a technical term for a particular portion of the meal-offering, or the offering of incense. See Lev. ii. 2 and xxiv. 7. The title in the LXX reads 'for a memorial concerning the sabbath-day.'

1. The distinction between the chastisement of anger and of love is brought out in Ps. vi. 1—see note there—and in Jer. x. 24. David, as well as later O. T. saints, quite understood and

2 For thine arrows stick fast in me,
And thy hand presseth me sore.
3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine indignation;
Neither is there any health in my bones because of my sin.
4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head:
As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
5 My wounds stink and are corrupt,
Because of my foolishness.
6 I am pained and bowed down greatly;

---

recognized that suffering might be only a mark of fatherly regard, and he submitted to it as such, 2 Sam. xii, xxiv. 17. But the explicit distinction belongs rather to a later period.

2. Two conjugations of the same verb are employed for **stick fast** and **presseth sore.** It is difficult to render this in English, but we might say, 'Thine arrows have sunk down into me, and down upon me has sunk heavily thine hand.' The chief point is that it is God's arrows and God's hand that have caused the woe.

3, 4. Not only so, but the anger is deserved. The cause is sin, which the Psalmist bitterly feels and fully confesses. **Flesh** and **bones** represent the whole framework of the body; its afflictions bring home to him the heinousness of sin, which but for this kind of chastisement he might not have adequately felt. 'No health' means *lit.* 'no rest,' he tosses like a fever-stricken patient. In the fourth verse the sense of sin predominates, its copious floods have overwhelmed him, its terrible burden crushes him.

5-8. In each of these four verses words are used which hardly bear literal translation, but which vividly represent aspects of physical suffering. (1) The **wounds** are those which are caused by severe stripes, which fester and give forth a bad odour. (2) **I am bent and bowed down greatly** describes the cramped and cringing attitude of one who can hardly move for pain. (3) The central parts of the body are filled with **burning**, i. e. the fever of inflammation. (4) Hence he is **faint and sore bruised**, more *lit.* 'benumbed and sore broken,' the chill of approaching death is upon him.

The only additional elements in this painful description are that sin is recognized as foolishness, verse 5; that the Psalmist wears the outward garb and aspect of a mourner, 6; and that his pain

I go mourning all the day long.
For my loins are filled with burning; 7
And there is no soundness in my flesh.
I am faint and sore bruised: 8
I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.
Lord, all my desire is before thee; 9
And my groaning is not hid from thee.
My heart throbbeth, my strength faileth me: 10
As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.
My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my plague; 11
And my kinsmen stand afar off.
They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me*; 12
And they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things,
And imagine deceits all the day long.
But I, as a deaf man, hear not; 13

---

is not merely physical, but that he cries aloud because of 'the mourning,' R. V. **disquietness of my heart,** 8. The deepest trouble, after all, is within.

9. The God to whom the Psalmist cries understands the reality and depth of his need. Men for the most part do not. The chief comment which the foregoing descriptions arouse in the modern reader is that they are 'exaggerated,' 'oriental,' 'unreal.' If the pain was physical, less should have been said about it; if it be a description of grief for sin, the language is morbid and extreme. Such is the inevitable comment of the world; only God knows and understands the penitent's heart.

10. This verse represents the exhaustion of one who has passed through paroxysms of pain. The agony is not so keen, but it has left him spent, panting, half-blind and wholly helpless.

11, 12. In addition, like Job, he is deserted by his friends, or they fail to understand and sympathize, whilst enemies take advantage of his distress. R. V. by using in verse 11 the word **plague** suggests the idea of leprosy; friends are aware of his troubles, but shun him as one who is smitten of God, Isa. liii. 4. The phraseology suggests that they are not only aware of his pain, but add to it by remaining spectators of his sufferings, while they refuse to help. The saints treat him thus, while the sinners plan to drag him further into sin and misery.

13, 14. The Psalmist's silence shows that his attitude is dif-

And I am as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.
14 Yea, I am as a man that heareth not,
And in whose mouth are no reproofs.
15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope:
Thou wilt answer, O Lord my God.
16 For I said, Lest they rejoice over me:
When my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.
17 For I am ready to halt,
And my sorrow is continually before me.
18 For I will declare mine iniquity;
I will be sorry for my sin.

---

ferent from that of Job. He is one 'in whose mouth are no arguments,' because he cannot, like Job, plead his own unsullied integrity. A. V. is mistaken in rendering the tenses as past, it is at the present moment that he is deaf and dumb before men. The trouble is not chiefly of their causing, and it is not removable by their remedies. The Psalmist leaves them to taunt or to slander, it is to God he wishes to speak, God's voice he wishes to hear.

15. The attitude of expectation is towards God, who alone possesses both knowledge of the disease and power to heal it. In the second clause 'Thou' is emphatic—'It is thou who wilt answer, O Lord my God.' Notice the three Divine names combined in this verse. *Jehovah* is used in verse 1, *Adonai* in verse 9; both these, together with *Elohim*, are found here and again in verses 21, 22.

16. Various pleas are here introduced. **For I said** introduces them, as having formed the basis of the previous prayer. One is, **Lest they rejoice**, i. e. those who are enemies alike of God and His servant. For, in spite of God's just anger against him, the Psalmist claims to belong to the side of righteousness on the earth; he is its representative, though unworthy, and fears lest he should bring discredit on its cause.

17. The next plea is his own sore need. He is limping and ready to fall, see Ps. xxxv. 15. This may be understood of extreme physical weakness, or a sense of moral feebleness may be combined with it. This seems to be suggested by verse 16.

18. Another plea, the most potent of all. The contrite heart forms the best and truest sacrifice; the Psalmist brings as his offering secret penitence and open confession—all the reparation that man can make. The word translated **I will be sorry**—LXX

But mine enemies are lively, *and* are strong: 19
And they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.
They also that render evil for good 20
Are adversaries unto me, because I follow the thing that is good.
Forsake me not, O LORD: 21
O my God, be not far from me.
Make haste to help me, 22
O Lord my salvation.

For the Chief Musician, for Jeduthun. A Psalm of David. **39**
I said, I will take heed to my ways, 1

---

and Jerome, 'I will be anxious'—anticipates the later idea of 'anxiety' about the soul.

19. mine enemies are lively, and **are strong:** the emendation of the text suggested, 'They that without cause are mine enemies,' would complete the parallelism, but is uncalled for.

20. The attitude of the Psalmist towards men is different from his relation to God. Before men he is righteous, relatively if not absolutely so. He claims to be a follower of the good, to have returned good for evil to his enemies, and he fearlessly identifies himself with the cause of righteousness. He may, and does, feel himself compelled to be humble in the dust before God, but his neighbours and his enemies have no cause to complain of him.

21, 22. The last stanza is the brightest, though as yet only the dawn of returning day appears to earnest and believing prayer. The source of comfort is found in the recognition of what God is and will prove Himself to be. He is *Jehovah, Adonai, Elohim*; the Psalmist can say he is **my God** and **my salvation.** Whilst he has this storehouse to draw upon he cannot despair, though he has not yet, as in some previous instances, heard the word of pardon and deliverance.

PSALM XXXIX. MAN'S FRAILTY AND TRUE HOPE.

The pathetic beauty of this Psalm has been generally recognized; if its music is in a minor key it is subduing rather than depressing, for trust and hope are breathed from amidst its plaintive chords. It has been assigned to the author of the preceding Psalm, but, whilst points of comparison present themselves, the differences are still more marked. It represents a later stage of thought and feeling—either in personal experience or national history.

It is clear from the opening words that sorrow and mental

That I sin not with my tongue:

perplexity were not new to the Psalmist. He has passed through many stages of trial. His own personal sufferings, the prosperity of the wicked, the seeming purposelessness of human life, are themes which have often stirred his soul to the depths. Time and again he has been moved to rebel and loudly to complain, if not to blaspheme. Thus far, however, he has kept silence, till in the Psalm his unrest finds utterance. Not, however, in the tumultuous words in which long repressed feeling generally issues; the tone is calm though earnest in its pleading; the Psalmist has already learned some of the lessons of sorrow. Utterance has brought some relief, 'like dull narcotics, numbing pain.' But the Psalm closes in a kind of twilight; before the morning of joy has actually dawned the Psalmist sees a glimmer of hope, and he ends with a touching prayer that this may deepen and grow into fruition.

The opening stanza, verses 1–3, is introductory, describing the occasion of the Psalm; in 4, 5 the writer prays, pleading his own frailty; in 6–11 he enlarges upon the transitoriness of human life generally and his personal trouble; while in the closing stanza, 12, 13, he renews his prayer as a mortal child of man, staying his weakness upon the eternal God.

'Jeduthun,' whose name is found in the title—see also Pss. lxii and lxxvii—is described in 2 Chron. xxxv. 16 as a contemporary of David and 'the king's seer.' In 1 Chron. xvi. 41 Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun are named as three leaders of temple-choirs or musical guilds. Elsewhere, as in 1 Chron. xv. 17, the name Ethan is mentioned as a third with Heman and Asaph. In the present instance Jeduthun would appear to be the name of the 'precentor,' but the preposition used in Pss. lxii and lxxvii is a different one, 'after the manner of Jeduthun,' and some have questioned whether the word is a proper name at all. The personal name was, however, in all probability traditional, though the subsequent use of it in connexion with music varied.

1. The silence here described is not the same as that described in xxxviii. 13, though it is natural to compare the two cases. In the former a conscious sinner, assailed by insults, forbears to reply; here a saint, sorely exercised by the problems of life, restrains his murmurings and complaints in the presence of the ungodly, lest his words should do harm. So Job in his earlier trials 'sinned not with his lips,' did not 'charge God with foolishness,' but in silence 'received evil' at the hands of the Lord (Job i. 22, ii. 10). The third line reads *lit.* 'I will put a muzzle on my mouth': compare Mic. vii. 5, 'Keep the doors of thy mouth.' The complaints which the Psalmist restrains Jeremiah did not hesitate to utter, complaining that God had deceived him (xv. 18

I will keep my mouth with a bridle,
While the wicked is before me.
I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from 2
good;
And my sorrow was stirred.
My heart was hot within me; 3
While I was musing the fire kindled:
Then spake I with my tongue:
LORD, make me to know mine end, 4
And the measure of my days, what it is;
Let me know how frail I am.

---

and xx. 7), words which well might sound blasphemous to outsiders. Some expositors think that the clause **While the wicked is before me** indicate the source of the Psalmist's temptation—while they flaunt themselves in their prosperity before my eyes; but this interpretation seems less likely than the one given above.

2, 3. even from good: R. V. marg. 'and had no comfort.' Either of these translations makes good sense. The former is supported by Gen. xxxi. 24, 'Speak not, either good or bad'; the latter is in accordance with the idiomatic use of the preposition, 'far from good,' and is more in harmony with the context—'I kept silence joylessly' (Maclaren), or, without allowing myself the relief of expression. Three stages are mentioned which led up to utterance. (1) **My sorrow was stirred,** unrest such as friction without outlet causes; (2) **My heart grew hot** with indignation and passion; (3) **the fire kindled**—it blazed up in flame, and therefore now could not be repressed. The next clause is more expressive without the explanatory 'Then,' which is not found in the Hebrew.

4. It must be granted that this resigned and touching prayer is not what might have been expected from the introductory words. Here is no Job-like outburst of one who would fill his mouth with arguments when admitted to plead his cause in Jehovah's presence. Either the words of hot impatience are not recorded, or the Psalmist in his period of still submission had learned his lesson and hushed and quieted his soul (cxxxi. 2) before he began to speak.

He asks that he may be taught his own frailty and transiency, as the best way of facing the problems of life. The clue to the labyrinth is here; things are not what they seem; and the creature of a day, who belongs to a crowd of fleeting shadows, will not venture to argue with the Almighty.

5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* handbreadths;
And mine age is as nothing before thee:
Surely every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.
[Selah

6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew:
Surely they are disquieted in vain:
He heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

7 And now, Lord, what wait I for?

---

5. as **handbreadths,** each one less than half a span, a seventh part of a cubit—a few such brief spaces make up the whole of life. Render, 'And my life-time is as nothing before thee'; the word **age** does not convey the idea, which might be cumbrously paraphrased, 'the duration of my transitory existence.'

Three times in as many lines is repeated the conjunction translated in A. V. and R. V. **Surely.** This is perhaps the best rendering, if it be borne in mind that the word always contains the idea of 'nothing but'—as if many alternatives had been considered, and the reasoner is shut up to one only at the last. Hence here and in Ps. lxii, where also the word is characteristically repeated, many interpreters translate 'Only.' A literal rendering would be—'Only altogether-a-breath is every man even when standing firm.'

6. Better, 'Surely as a shadow doth man walk to and fro:
Surely for vanity are they disquieted.'

Breath—shadow—phantom—dream—such are the words used by the poets of all ages to set forth the brief, unsubstantial life of man—'swift as a shadow, short as any dream.' The Psalmist introduces at the same time an artistic touch and a moral lesson when he contrasts the confused and boisterous din of man's strivings with the vanity, the nothingness in which they end. And yet another, when he says with graphic suggestiveness, 'He pileth up hoards, and knoweth not who shall carry them off.' These words are not uttered complainingly. They represent a view of life which the Psalmist desires to reach, one which will furnish an antidote to the murmurings he was disposed to utter when he saw the prosperity of evil-doers. One who foresaw the end of Christ's parable of the Rich Fool would not envy him his great barns and greater stores of goods.

7. And now always marks a turning-point in argument or exhortation. Here the words open up that secret source of consolation which has enabled the Psalmist to dwell pensively

My hope is in thee.
Deliver me from all my transgressions: 8
Make me not the reproach of the foolish.
I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; 9
Because thou didst it.
Remove thy stroke away from me: 10
I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.
When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, 11
Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth:
Surely every man is vanity. [Selah
Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; 12
Hold not thy peace at my tears:
For I am a stranger with thee,
A sojourner, as all my fathers were.

---

but not sadly upon the transiency of earthly things. **What wait I for?** asks a natural question, for a man who took such a view of life as is implied in verses 5 and 6 might seem to have no aim or object in life. The answer to the question, 'What do I look for?' is not future blessedness, but a present God.

8, 9. The Psalmist desires a manifestation of God to himself; while he acknowledges that his suffering has not been undeserved, he claims that as a true servant of God he should be vindicated in the eyes of the foolish, i. e. the careless and godless evil-doers around.

10, 11. The humility of these pleas shows that chastening has done its work. Affliction is recognized as coming from God; rebellion is out of place and useless on the part of sinful man; the Psalmist only pleads, God be merciful!

Render the second line of verse 11 as R. V. marg., 'Thou consumest like a moth his delights' or 'his desirable things.' The word is usually found in the plural, and is here used collectively. The silent but effectual destruction effected by a moth upon a garment (see Isa. l. 9) forms the point of comparison. The transient element in life for the moment hides the permanent—'Nought but a breath is every man!'

12. A final plea. One who is thus a transient guest may throw himself upon the clemency of the lord of the country—a claim universally allowed in the East. Of the four words for stranger in Hebrew, somewhat inconsistently translated in our versions, two describe a man who is literally a 'foreigner' and has no rights

13 O spare me, that I may recover strength,
Before I go hence, and be no more.

40 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

1 I waited patiently for the LORD;

---

in a land to which in no sense he belongs. The other two are used here, the more important of them, *gêr*, being the name of the 'stranger' so often recognized in Jewish legislation. He is a man dwelling permanently in a land which is not his by right of birth, but who as a resident possesses certain rights and performs corresponding services. See Lev. xix. 23. Another passage teaches Israelites that the land of promise which they call theirs is really God's: 'ye are strangers and sojourners with me,' Lev. xxv. 23. The idea is applied in the N. T.: see 1 Pet. ii. 11; Heb. xi. 13.

13. The first line runs *lit.*, 'O look away from me, that I may brighten up.' The usual prayer of the Psalmists is that God would look towards them and brighten them with the light of His countenance. But a parallel to the expression of this verse is found in Job vii. 19, 'How long wilt thou not look away from me?' The Watcher of men sees so much that is amiss, that He cannot look at the life of foolish, sinful man without frowning. Such a frown strikes terror, and it is the wrath of the All-searching One that the Psalmist fears. He prays therefore that the keen glance of those piercing eyes may be averted, and that God's mercy may cheer him for a moment before he passes away into a land which in comparison with the present life is so shadowy and dark that its inhabitants may even be represented as 'being no more.'

Psalm XL. Thankful Self-Consecration.

Something may be learned from the study of this Psalm by those who would understand the methods of the compilers of the Psalter. The latter portion of it, verses 13–17, occurs again as a separate Psalm—lxx, in the second Book—with the change of the name *Yahweh* into *Elohim* and some other modifications. It is clear, therefore, either that two Psalms originally distinct have been combined, or that a portion of one has been detached for separate use; and that editors were in the habit of modifying the text, either for liturgical or other reasons. The conjectures of modern critics are accordingly justified when they suggest similar explanations in the case of other apparently composite Psalms.

The whole history of this case, however, is not clear. The majority of critics hold that two originally independent Psalms have been combined; some are quite as sure that the Psalm as

And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the 2
miry clay;
And he set my feet upon a rock, and established my
goings.

---

it stands was composed as one whole. It is true that two portions are discernible, very different in character, but the second of these does not exactly coincide with Ps. lxx, nor is it easy to fashion a complete and well-rounded Psalm from the former part of the present one. So far as internal evidence goes, verses 1–10 are vigorous in expression and joyful in tone, while verses 11–17 are plaintive and supplicatory, and in style somewhat tame, presenting little more than an echo of other Psalms.

It is not easy to speak with confidence, but internal evidence seems to point to verses 1–10 as an original Psalm, expressing in striking language a sense of God's goodness in delivering the writer from trouble and danger, and his determination to yield himself fully to the service of his Deliverer. An appendix was added later (verses 12–17), in which the jubilant confidence of the earlier verses passes into a sadder and less hopeful strain, and a portion of this was used as a short litany and placed in a later Elohistic collection as Ps. lxx. The first word of verse 14, 'Be pleased,' was omitted, perhaps to make a better opening. The alternative to this hypothesis is to suppose that Ps. xl from the first formed one whole, but the transition from triumph to depression is very marked, and it seems hardly possible that the same writer in the same experiences could pen verses 1–3 and verses 12, 13, 17.

There is no intrinsic reason for ascribing this Psalm to David, and several may be urged against it; but the alleged points of historical connexion with Jeremiah or the return from exile are hardly more convincing than the arguments of those who would accept the title literally. The spiritual significance of the words is not affected by the uncertainty as to author and occasion.

1. Render, 'For Jehovah I waited, waited'; only thus can the emphasis of the Hebrew idiom be reproduced in English.

2. Two figures may be combined here, that of a dungeon in which a man is imprisoned, and a swamp in which he is likely to be swallowed up. Or both may be combined, as in the case of Jeremiah, who was let down into the dungeon where 'was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire' (xxxviii. 6). Read, with R. V. marg., 'a pit of destruction.' The metaphor probably indicates trouble rather than sin; which might, however, be included if verse 12 formed part of the original composition.

3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise
unto our God:
Many shall see it, and fear,
And shall trust in the LORD.
4 Blessed is the man that maketh the LORD his trust,
And respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to
lies.
5 Many, O LORD my God, are the wonderful works which
thou hast done,
And thy thoughts which are to us-ward:
They cannot be set in order unto thee;
If I would declare and speak of them,
They are more than can be numbered.
6 Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in;

---

3. The **new song**, mentioned also in xxxiii. 3, xcvi. 1, Isa. xl. 12, as well as in the Apocalypse, describes the fresh outburst of praise which fresh mercies and signal interventions demand. For the phrase **see it, and fear**, compare Isa. lx. 5. Terror is of course not meant, but reverent confidence in God.

4. The Psalmist passes from personal deliverance to more general considerations. He appears to have lived in a time when there was danger of apostasy from Jehovah worship: hence his denunciation of the 'arrogant' and 'those who fall away treacherously.' The word translated 'respecteth' means *lit.* 'turneth away,' and increases the probability that idolatry was rife and failure in allegiance to the true God only too common.

5. This exclamation is probably caused by the recent manifestation of God's goodness which prompted the praise of verse 3, but with a national rather than a personal reference. 'Marvellous works' is a kind of standing phrase for striking deliverances such as God wrought out for Israel at special junctures, not necessarily implying what we call 'miracles.' Compare Exod. xv. 11; Ps. lxxviii. 4, &c.

The third line may be translated either, 'There is none that can be compared unto thee' (R. V. marg.), or 'There is no setting forth of them unto thee.' But the latter meaning is more in harmony with the context, and preserves the parallelism. In the former case the clause forms a somewhat awkward parenthesis.

6. Between the last verse and this stands the unuttered question, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits?' The

Mine ears hast thou opened:
Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.
Then said I, Lo, I am come; 7
In the roll of the book it is written of me:

---

answer is of that spiritual kind which shows how fully the devout Jew sometimes understood the evangelical spirit. Four kinds of sacrifice are mentioned here: *zebach*, **sacrifice**, and *minchah*, **offering**, are the general terms for the bleeding and unbloody sacrifice respectively; while the *'olah* or **burnt offering** represents the entire consecration of the worshipper, and the **sin offering** the propitiation necessary before an offender could be re-admitted to the Divine presence and favour. None of these in and of themselves are well-pleasing to God; the Psalmist, like the prophet in Isa. i. 11 and elsewhere, understood that these were but symbolic of heart-service such as God delights in.

The clause interpolated between these two parallel statements is somewhat obscure. Literally it runs, see marg., 'Ears hast thou digged,' or 'pierced for me.' The difficulty lies in the metaphor, for the meaning seems clear—Thou hast given me ears to hear thy voice, and desirest to find a heart ready to obey it. Whether the 'digging' means the original planting of the ear, or the uncovering of it and making the passage clearer—'boring' as mentioned in Exod. xxi. 6, a mark of perpetual servitude, cannot be intended—the conclusion is much the same. The LXX has a curious reading, 'A body hast thou prepared me.' This may have arisen from a confusion of words on the part of a scribe, or it may represent an intentional paraphrase on the part of the translator. The quotation in Heb. x. 6 in the main follows the LXX version.

7. The readiness of the Psalmist to obey the call of God is here expressed. The willing servant says, 'Here am I.' Again all is clear with the exception of a parenthetical clause which corresponds in position with that just discussed, and which should probably be translated, 'In the roll of the book it is prescribed to me.' The break in the construction found in the second line of each of these verses, whilst at first disconcerting, when examined, is seen to heighten the effect. The Psalmist expresses his eagerness to engage in a service he has learned to love; but he interpolates a reference to God's command in this verse, as in verse 7 he interpolated a statement of God's claim. The reference to the law and the roll of the book appears to be to Deuteronomy, in which the spiritual claims of the law are specially enforced.

The quotation in Hebrews and the application of these words to Christ, follows the general spirit and tenor of the passage exactly, though questions may arise as to the phraseology in detail.

8 I delight to do thy will, O my God;
Yea, thy law is within my heart.
9 I have published righteousness in the great congregation;
Lo, I will not refrain my lips,
O LORD, thou knowest.
10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart;
I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation:
I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth
from the great congregation.
11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD:
Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve
me.
12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about,

---

9. Render, 'I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness—my lips I did not restrain.' Law and 'gospel' are not opposed in the Psalmist's mind: no proclamation can be more welcome than that there is a God of righteousness in the earth. The variation of tense in the second clause does not imply a transition from the past to the future; all five clauses in verses 9 and 10 describe what the Psalmist has done or refrained from doing.

10. Various attributes of God, sometimes falsely placed in opposition to one another, are here mentioned in the same connexion and the same breath. **Faithfulness** secures **salvation; lovingkindness** is supported by **truth.**

11. The temptation may have arisen in a comparatively corrupt society not to testify thus openly: the Psalmist has not yielded to it, and therefore with confidence he appeals to God that as he has not restrained loyal witness and utterance, 'Thou, O Jehovah, wilt not restrain thy tender mercies from me.' The tense implies 'Thou wilt not, wilt Thou? I am persuaded that thy lovingkindness and truth which I have declared to others will be vouchsafed to guard me.'

12. Whether the last verse be translated as prayer or as confident assurance, there is a hint in it that the Psalmist needs help. Of this the later author—if such there were—avails himself to describe a condition of things not previously suggested. Those who maintain the unity of the Psalm are compelled to admit that no account is given of the sudden storm-clouds which are here found changing the whole aspect of the landscape. **Evils** are troubles, but they are due to **iniquities**; and when these words

Mine iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able
to look up;
They are more than the hairs of mine head, and my heart
hath failed me.
Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: 13
Make haste to help me, O LORD.
Let them be ashamed and confounded together 14
That seek after my soul to destroy it:
Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonour
That delight in my hurt.
Let them be desolate by reason of their shame 15
That say unto me, Aha, Aha.
Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in 16
thee:
Let such as love thy salvation say continually,
The LORD be magnified.
But I am poor and needy; 17
Yet the Lord thinketh upon me:
Thou art my help and my deliverer;
Make no tarrying, O my God.

---

are written, both are felt to be overwhelming. The man who had proclaimed God's deliverances so that many should see and fear is himself not able to look up; he who had just sung a new song and expressed himself as ready for any service is so depressed that he says, 'my heart hath forsaken me.'

13-16. Almost all these prayers are found word for word in other Psalms. For verse 13[a] see Ps. xxxviii. 22, verse 13[b] see Ps. xxii. 19. Verse 14 is made up of phrases found either in verses 4 or 26 of Ps. xxxv, whilst every clause in verses 15 and 16 can be gathered from some part of the same Psalm. This plagiarism marks a second-rate writer, and is very unlike the vigorous originality of the earlier portion.

17. The close of the Psalm is touching in its contrast with the opening. Some disconsolate one speaks for himself, conscious that he has the same ground of hope as the man who was taken from the pit of destruction, and pleading that the like deliverance may be his.

41 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

1 Blessed is he that considereth the poor:
The LORD will deliver him in the day of evil.

'But I—afflicted and needy—the Lord thinketh of me:
My help and deliverer art thou; O my God, tarry not.'

Such a suppliant, waiting for Jehovah and crying unto Him, will not be long before he too finds his feet set upon a rock, his goings established, and his mouth filled with a new and joyful song.

PSALM XLI. A SUFFERER'S CONSOLATION.

It is not unnatural to think of this Psalm as David's, and in reading verse 9 to think of the treachery of Ahithophel, see 2 Sam. xvi and xvii. This is the older view, accepted by Delitzsch and others; Ewald says, 'manifestly written by a prince.' But the sickness which forms a somewhat prominent feature in the Psalm is not alluded to in the history, nor does the way in which 'enemies' come to visit the sufferer correspond with David's circumstances at the time of the rebellion of Absalom. Baethgen assigns the Psalm to the post-Exilic period, and Cheyne interprets it of 'the people of Israel likened to a man who is dangerously sick.'

As we read the Psalm, it is written by a man hardly recovering from a dangerous illness, the personal and bodily affliction being the main element in his trouble. This is aggravated, however, by the base ingratitude of false friends, who regard the illness as a judgement from God and cruelly anticipate a fatal issue. There is not sufficient evidence to warrant us in assigning the authorship to David, and any parallel which may be found in the condition of the nation to the sufferer in the Psalm is altogether secondary and derived. It may, however, be read of David, as Kirkpatrick suggests, if he is viewed as 'unnerved by sickness, in which he recognized a just punishment for his sins,' and as lying prostrate and helpless before Absalom's rebellion actually broke out.

The first stanza, verses 1–3, contains a general meditation, which in verses 4–9 the Psalmist applies to himself; verses 10–12 contain a closing prayer.

1. A beatitude, the O. T. counterpart to 'Blessed are the merciful.' The word **poor** hardly conveys the idea of the original, which means feeble, slender, limp, as of a limb that cannot hold itself up; if 'weak' be accepted, as in R. V. marg., it must be understood of any who need help 'in mind, body, or estate,' but with perhaps a special reference to bodily sickness. The A. V. 'in time of trouble' gives the thought of the Psalmist better in English than R. V. **in the day of evil**, though the latter is the

The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he 2
shall be blessed upon the earth;
And deliver not thou him unto the will of his enemies.
The LORD will support him upon the couch of languishing: 3
Thou makest all his bed in his sickness.
I said, O LORD, have mercy upon me: 4
Heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.
Mine enemies speak evil against me, *saying*, 5
When shall he die, and his name perish?
And if he come to see *me*, he speaketh vanity; 6
His heart gathereth iniquity to itself:
When he goeth abroad, he telleth it.

---

more literal rendering. 'Evil' in English has a predominantly ethical meaning.

2. Jehovah will preserve him. The future tense adopted in R. V. is much better than the optative (marg.). The Psalmist is thinking of himself and his own attempts to help the needy, and comforting himself with the thought that God will not forget him in sickness, but preserve him from death and grant him prosperity again. The last clause may be a prayer, as the Revisers render it, but it is better to keep the future throughout.

3. The second clause runs *lit.*, 'All his lying down thou changest in his sickness.' The meaning is well given by Cheyne's paraphrase, 'As oft as he lies low, thou recoverest him in his sickness.' The idea of arranging the bed for the sufferer's comfort cannot be drawn from the root meaning to 'turn,' not to say that it is in itself a Western and modern one.

4. Render, 'As for me, I have said, Be gracious unto me.' The words that follow do not belong simply to the past, they represent the sufferer's present attitude before God. He is content to accept his sickness as a mark of God's displeasure against his sins, though he resents the malicious interpretation of his enemies. A saint may say, 'I am the chief of sinners,' when it is not true for his enemies to say it of him.

5, 6. Malice and falsehood are near akin. Those who were gloating over the sufferer's evil case, and gleefully anticipating his death and the disappearance of his memory, pay visits of pretended sympathy, and speak 'falsehood' (R. V. marg.). Very striking is the picture of the hypocrite whilst in the sick man's presence gathering malice in his heart and material upon which it

7 All that hate me whisper together against me:
Against me do they devise my hurt.
8 An evil disease, *say they*, cleaveth fast unto him:
And now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.
9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread,
Hath lifted up his heel against me.
10 But thou, O LORD, have mercy upon me, and raise me up,
That I may requite them.
11 By this I know that thou delightest in me,
Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

---

may feed, and then, when he joins his associates outside, relieving his mean and spiteful soul.

7, 8. This sickness is a matter of importance to many. They are accustomed to meet like an opposition faction at a court, whispering calumnies and hoping the worst. The first clause of verse 8 runs *lit.*, 'A thing of Belial is poured out upon him.' But the translation of R.V. could hardly be improved upon, for the evil is physical, and the notion of its having 'fastened upon' the sufferer like welded metal (Job xxviii. 2) is implied by the Hebrew root used.

9. This treacherous cruelty finds its climax in one person, **mine own familiar friend,** *lit.* 'the man of my peace'; one who was bound to me by outward ties of hospitality and kindness, as well as by an inward bond of trustful friendship, has taken this opportunity of doing me all the mischief in his power. The clause **Hath lifted up** (*lit.* 'made great') **his heel against me** may refer to violence, i. e. has struck me with all his force; or to fraud, he has raised his heel covertly to trip me up and overthrow me; the latter is the more appropriate to the context.

The 'fulfilling' of this scripture spoken of in John xiii. 18 in relation to Christ and Judas does not necessarily imply conscious prediction on the part of the Psalmist, but a most appropriate application of the words is made on the part of the evangelist.

10, 11. A prayer that God would in his case illustrate those general principles of which the Psalmist spoke in verses 1–3. The idea of personal retaliation, **that I may requite them,** appears here again; and though it may be said that these malicious traitors are enemies of God and of righteousness, the note of personal triumph anticipated cannot be altogether shut out, but with the

And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, 12
And settest me before thy face for ever.

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, 13
From everlasting and to everlasting.
Amen, and Amen.

---

addition named in verse 11 that the Psalmist wished for his own triumph mainly as a proof that God was well pleased with him.

12. The present tenses represent the assurance of faith. The Psalmist is confident that his enemies' malicious hopes will be disappointed, because, sinful as he is, he is a man of integrity. God will raise him from his sickness, vindicate his character, prolong his life, and grant him a posterity who shall perpetuate his name 'for ever' in the sight and in the favour of God.

13. This verse is not a part of the Psalm, but a 'subscription' appended by the editor to mark the close of the first Book of Psalms. See also Pss. lxxii. 18, lxxxix. 52, and cvi. 48. Such doxologies were usual not only at the beginning of prayer, 1 Kings viii. 15 and 1 Chron. xxix. 10, but as ejaculations in conversation and upon all solemn occasions, 1 Kings i. 48. The use at the end of various collections of Psalms is liturgical.

The present doxology is simple but sublime :—

> 'Blessed be Jehovah, God of Israel :
> From eternity and to eternity. Amen, and Amen.'

The word **Amen** is used adverbially, and means 'firmly' or 'truly'; it may be uttered by a suppliant at the end of his own prayers, but more usually in the O. T. it represents the response of another, as when Jeremiah responds to the words of God (xi. 5), or to those of Hananiah (xxviii. 6). It also expresses, as in 1 Chron. xvi. 36, the response of the people in public prayer, and that is no doubt the meaning here.

BOOK II.

PSALMS 42—72.

It has already been said, see Introd. p. 6, that the division of the Psalms into Books does not precisely correspond with the history and growth of the various collections. The first Book does, however, in all probability correspond to a first general collection. As we have seen, all the Psalms in it are ascribed 'to David,' with a very few exceptions which do not invalidate the rule. The second general division, however, does not coincide with the second Book. It appears to have been formed by the union of several smaller collections or groups, occurring partly in the second and partly in the third Book, including altogether Pss. xlii to lxxxix. The greater portion of this division (Pss. xlii–lxxxiii) is 'Elohistic,' i.e. the name *Elohim*, 'God,' is used throughout it, instead of *Yahweh*, which prevails in the first Book. The exact figures are: in Book I 'Yahweh' occurs 272 times, 'Elohim' 15, while in Book II 'Elohim' is found 164 times, 'Yahweh' only 30 times.

The Book on which we now enter consists of the following elements: eight Psalms (xlii–xlix) 'of the sons of Korah,' one (l) 'of Asaph,' a group of eighteen Psalms (li to lxx, except lxvi, lxvii) 'of David,' an anonymous Psalm (lxxxi), and one 'of Solomon' (lxxii).

As this is the first appearance of 'Korahite' Psalms, and the greater portion of such Psalms are found at the opening of the second Book, it will be convenient here to explain the meaning of the term. Korah, who was descended from Levi, is described in Num. xvi as instigating a rebellion against Moses and perishing in the attempt. His descendants are frequently mentioned as taking part in the service of the temple. In 2 Chron. xx. 19 they are spoken of as singers, though in 1 Chron. ix. 19 and xxvi. 1 they appear as door-keepers. Heman, the leader of one of the three great temple choirs, is represented as a Korahite, see 1 Chron. vi. 33 and xxv. 6. It would appear that at the time of the second temple a guild of singers was known by this name, tracing their descent from Levi through Kohath and Korah, and the groups of Pss. xlii–xlix and lxxxiv, lxxxv, lxxxvii are ascribed in some sense 'to' this guild or company.

The question is, in what sense: and two chief answers are returned. The A.V. rendering **for** seems to imply that the part of the Korahites was to set these Psalms to music, as in the phrase 'For the precentor.' It is, however, now generally

accepted that the preposition should be rendered as in R.V. of, corresponding to the title 'of David,' and indicating not personal authorship, but the name of a collection—the hymn-book, if we may so say, of the Korahite choir. There is a certain family likeness in these Psalms, partly of subject, partly of style. Many of them exhibit strong attachment to the temple and its service, whilst there is a strain of freshness, not easy to describe, which distinguishes their language from the smooth and conventional phraseology of the latest liturgical Psalms.

Psalms XLII and XLIII. The Sigh of an Exile.

The two Psalms numbered xlii and xliii in the Psalter are evidently closely connected. They are concerned with the same theme, breathe the same spirit, are couched in the same style, and are marked by the recurrence of the same refrain. All the Psalms in Book II except xliii are furnished with titles, and this points to the fact that in the earliest collection it formed one with Ps. xlii, as it now does in a large number of Hebrew MSS. The majority, however, present the Psalms separately, as do all the ancient versions. Hence the division must have taken place early, and it is possible that xliii is a supplement from the hand of the same or a later poet attached to the original composition. The probability is, however, that the whole sixteen verses were originally one composition, divided later into two for liturgical purposes, just as in other cases Psalms originally distinct have been combined for similar reasons.

When the devout Levite lived who here describes his love for the sanctuary, and under what circumstances he sang of his sorrow on account of banishment from it, we can only conjecture. Dates have been assigned to the Psalm varying from the time of David during Absalom's rebellion, say 1023 B.C. (Delitzsch), to the time of Antiochus the Great, B.C. 198 (Cheyne). It is not likely that it was written so early as the former date, nor so late as the latter. The temple is standing, its services are being carried on, and the Psalmist who has been wont to join in these is now prevented from worshipping with the great congregation. It does not follow that he was literally an exile, and he appears to be detained in North Palestine. He is surrounded by heathen enemies who taunt him with his allegiance to Jehovah : he hopes, however, to be delivered from them and to join again in the worship that he loves. The choice of dates seems to lie between the period of the later Monarchy and that shortly after the Exile, and the balance of probability seems to be in favour of the former, perhaps at the time of one of the Assyrian invasions.

The poem is skilfully constructed, whether the word 'Maschil' indicates this or not. It is obviously divided into three parts by the recurrence of the refrain 'Why art thou cast down, O my

42 For the Chief Musician; Maschil of the sons of Korah.

1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
When shall I come and appear before God?
3 My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?
4 These things I remember, and pour out my soul within me,

---

soul!' In each stanza there is longing and hope, but the plaintive strain is somewhat less dominant in the first, xlii. 1–5, than in the second, 6–11, while in the third, Ps. xliii, hopefulness decidedly prevails.

1. Render, 'As a hind which panteth.' The noun is common gender, but the verb is feminine, as is the word for 'soul' in Hebrew and in most languages when metaphor is employed. The word translated **panteth** occurs only here and in Joel i. 20. Some interpreters, ancient and modern, understand it to mean the peculiar cry of the stag, but it is tolerably clear that it indicates the intense longing of the animal for water in a period of drought.

2. Some have found a reference in the phrase **the living God** to the living, or running, streams which are so greatly to be preferred to stagnant pools. This is unlikely; we are rather to understand that the *animula vagula blandula*, the timid, eager, fluttering soul of man, cannot be satisfied with any abstraction to worship and to trust in, but longs for a God who knows and feels and loves and cares—One who is strongly contrasted with the 'dumb idols' of the heathen.

The phrase **appear before God** is the usual formula for the annual visits to the temple mentioned in Exod. xxiii. 17; compare 'every one of them appeareth before God in Zion,' Ps. lxxxiv. 7. The expression is to be understood literally here; the spiritual blessing is closely associated with the earthly sanctuary.

3. It does not appear who are the foes who taunt him in his sorrow. Verse 10 and xlii. 1, 2 make it most probable that the 'ungodly' and the 'adversaries' are not Jews, and it would appear as if the Psalmist were alone amongst men who neither acknowledged Jehovah nor sympathized with him in trouble. At the same time the Book of Job and many Psalms show, and all experience confirms the truth, that co-religionists may be most cruel of all in pressing home the taunt of this verse—God hath forgotten thee.

4. Memories crowd in upon him, but here the 'remembering

How I went with the throng, and led them to the house
of God,
With the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping
holyday.
Why art thou cast down, O my soul? 5
And *why* art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him
For the health of his countenance.

---

happier things' is not 'sorrow's crown of sorrow,' but affords the truest relief. Render, 'These things would I remember, as I pour out my soul within me,' viz. 'how I used to pass with the festal throng, how I used to lead them in procession to the house of God,' &c. If the Psalmist can find no sympathy around him, he will recall the times when he was permitted to enjoy the nearer presence of God in the company of multitudes like-minded with himself. **Within me,** *lit.* 'upon me.' Compare Ps. cxxxi. 2, where the Psalmist hushes and quiets his soul like a fractious child. Here he lets it have full course to weep out its sorrows, recalling brighter days.

5. But only for a moment. In this verse, repeated as a refrain and forming the ruling strain of the Psalm, the believer takes his soul to task for indulging a natural but more or less distrustful grief, and he recalls himself to the abiding Source of comfort and hope.

'Why dost thou bow thyself down,' i. e. in mourning (compare Isa. lviii. 5, 'to bow down the head like a rush') 'and moan within me?' *lit.* 'upon me,' as in the last verse. It was the object of the Psalmist's enemies to induce him to give up confidence in a God who would not, or did not, help him. He discerns that his one ground of safety is to cling in faith to One whose very presence brings deliverance. R. V. marg. 'help' is nearer to the Hebrew than the translation 'health' in the text.

According to the received Hebrew text, the last line should be translated 'for the help of his countenance'; or, more correctly, 'his countenance is salvation.' R. V. marg., however, shows that an alternative reading is followed by the versions, according to which the refrain here is found in the same form as in verse 11 and xliii. 5, 'Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.' It is advisable to follow this reading, since the construction by which the rendering of R. V. text is obtained from the Massoretic text is an awkward one. The chief objection is that this removes the words **O my God** from the opening of verse 6, but the confusion

6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me:
Therefore do I remember thee from the land of Jordan,
And the Hermons, from the hill Mizar.
7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts:
All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
8 *Yet* the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the day-time,
And in the night his song shall be with me,
Even a prayer unto the God of my life.

---

has probably arisen from the occurrence of the word *Elohai* twice, once at the end of verse 5 and again at the beginning of verse 6.

6. In spite of the rallying cry of the last verse, the Psalmist's soul is still bowed down, and has not yet recovered sufficient strength to raise herself. In this strophe the dejection is even deeper than before. The region described here, to which for the time the Psalmist is confined, is in the far north-east of Palestine, near the Caesarea Philippi of later days. The peaks of Hermon are described in the plural, as they would dominate the scene on which he was accustomed to gaze, and **the hill Mizar** ('little') would probably indicate a lower peak in the neighbourhood. The alteration in the reading proposed by Wellhausen, which would find in 'the little mountain' a reference to Zion, is far-fetched and unnecessary.

7. For **at the noise of thy waterspouts** read 'In the voice of thy cataracts.' The scenery suggests this striking figure. The rocks of the neighbourhood, in the spring season when the snows of Hermon melt, are covered with foaming cascades, and the impetuous Jordan would be a rushing torrent. A peculiar word is used which indicates the noise of water rushing out from a narrow channel or orifice. One flood seems to call to another, and to make the echoes ring. So do waves of trouble in succession overwhelm the Psalmist, but he does not lose sight of the fact that these are **thy billows**; even the storms are under God's direction.

8. Hence no 'Yet' is needed at the beginning of this verse, and there is none in the Hebrew. Kirkpatrick, as well as many earlier interpreters, renders the verbs of this verse in the past tense, making these clauses to contain a retrospect. But it is better to understand that the Psalmist is here rallying the energies of his soul to trust in One who has not really forgotten him, however appearances may point that way. 'Out of the depths' he cries, and already song and prayer are lifting him Godwards.

I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? 9
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
As with a sword in my bones, mine adversaries reproach me; 10
While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?
Why art thou cast down, O my soul? 11
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: **43**
O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.
For thou art the God of my strength; why hast thou cast me off? 2

9–11. The words of his appeal follow—first a prayer, then a song. Render in verse 9, 'Let me say unto God'—I will address myself to the God of my life and the rock of my salvation, and urge before Him the soul's insistent question, Why? Such an expostulation often arises from Psalmist and prophet—why this seeming apathy on the part of God, which gives sore occasion to the enemy to blaspheme? Compare Isa. lii. 5. **Oppression of the enemy** here points to foreign invaders.

Render in verse 10, 'As though they would crush my bones,' *lit.* 'with a crushing in my bones'; compare vi. 2, 'my bones are vexed.' The very framework of the body is represented as being shaken by the bitter and cruel taunts of these unbelievers; as we say, 'they pierce my very heart.' The Psalmist responds by chanting his refrain, gathering new strength by the repetition of the old helpful words.

Psalm XLIII.

1. If the verses that follow did not originally form part of Ps. xlii, they must be understood as an additional stanza written by one who found himself in similar circumstances of trial, and deliberately set himself to copy the strain of the original writer. **An ungodly nation,** *lit.* 'loveless'—outside the covenant-bond with God and man—clearly points to heathen destitute of pity, upon whom all remonstrance would be lost.

Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

3 O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me:
Let them bring me unto thy holy hill,
And to thy tabernacles.

4 Then will I go unto the altar of God,
Unto God my exceeding joy:
And upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.

5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

---

2. Why go I mourning? A peculiar word is here used indicating a walk 'sad, solitary, slow,' and we might render 'Why go I wearily about in sadness?'

3. A prayer for deliverance couched in unusual but suggestive language. **Light** and **Truth** may be regarded as twin angels of the Presence guiding God's servant as Moses prayed that God would guide him, Exod. xxxiii. 15. Later Jewish writers find a reference to the Urim and Thummim (Light and Perfection) of Exod. xxviii. 30, Lev. viii. 8, which Philo in his allegorical fashion regards as symbolizing the two virtues Illumination and Truth. But in this verse we find grammatical personification of two well-known words, not an allegorical adaptation of a passage in the Law. The Psalmist prays that he may be led by these two celestial Messengers to the outward and material sanctuary which for him was the very presence of God.

4. Then will I go: better 'That I may come unto the altar, &c. . . . and give thanks unto Thee upon the harp, Elohim, my God.' This last somewhat awkward phrase corresponds in Elohistic documents to the much more natural and intelligible 'Jehovah my God.' Compare Exod. xx. 2 and Ps. l. 7.

5. The note of thanksgiving and joy in the last verse rings out more clearly than in any previous part of the whole Psalm, and we may therefore suppose that the refrain now repeated for the third time is to be sung more triumphantly than before. The Psalmist has obtained 'a garland for ashes, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,' Isa. lxi. 3.

For the Chief Musician; *a Psalm* of the sons of Korah. Maschil. 44

We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have 1
told us,

PSALM XLIV. A PRAYER IN NATIONAL HUMILIATION.

The chief features of this Psalm are that (1) it is distinctly national, at a period when the sense of national life was strong and a Psalmist could speak of 'our armies'; (2) very serious disaster had overtaken the people, to all appearance more than temporary in character; (3) these calamities are not viewed as a punishment for national sin, but it is possible to plead that Israel has been faithful to Jehovah and is in no danger of falling into idolatry.

It is not easy to fix upon a period which answers to this description, if we bear in mind also that the Psalm is one of an Elohistic collection, occurring early in the second book. Some of the best critics confidently pronounce it to be Maccabaean—a view held as early as the fourth century, and maintained by Calvin, as well as by many moderns. Davidic it seems impossible to suppose it, in spite of the arguments of Delitzsch, and the difficulty of assigning it to the period of the later monarchy lies in the strong assertion of national fidelity to Jehovah and of freedom from idolatry. If, however, this plea be considered, as it probably should, to be relative only, there seems no reason why the Psalm should not be viewed as dating from the period of reform in the time of Hezekiah, when the country was suffering from the Assyrian invasion. All the details cannot be made to fit in with any crisis in the Maccabaean uprising, though it is undeniable that in the general features of the picture that period is the most appropriate. The chief arguments against so late a date are to be drawn from the position of the Psalm thus early in the second book of the Psalter.

The outline of the Psalm is clear. Verses 1-3 celebrate the deliverances which God in old time wrought out for His people. In verses 4-8 the Psalmist claims that the trust of the people in their fathers' God is still complete and confident. But (9-16) God has forsaken them and left them to be trampled down by ruthless enemies, although (17-22) they have been faithful to their part of the covenant and have not 'stretched out hands to any strange god.' An urgent plea for immediate Divine succour (23-26) closes the Psalm.

1. This appeal to the past is common in the writings of prophets and Psalmists. In times of need both individuals and the community solaced themselves with recollections of what God had done for His people at the time of the Exodus and onwards.

What work thou didst in their days, in the days of old.
2 Thou didst drive out the nations with thy hand, and plantedst them in;
Thou didst afflict the peoples, and didst spread them abroad.
3 For they gat not the land in possession by their own sword,
Neither did their own arm save them:
But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance,
Because thou hadst a favour unto them.
4 Thou art my King, O God:
Command deliverance for Jacob.
5 Through thee will we push down our adversaries:

The days of old does not necessarily imply a very late date for the Psalm: compare 'the ancient times' in Isa. xxxvii. 26.

2. The settlement in Canaan rather than the Exodus is fixed upon as an illustration of God's intervention, because the trouble in the Psalm was the overrunning of the country by heathen. At the conquest of Canaan the position was reversed. Emphasis is to be laid upon **them**, i. e. our fathers, in each line of the verse. 'They have told us how it was they, themselves, whom Thou didst plant and cause to multiply.' The metaphor is that of a tree which is first deeply implanted in the soil and then spreads abroad its branches in beauty and strength. See Ps. lxxx. 8–10.

3. Render, 'For not by their own sword did they get possession'; they understood, as do we their descendants in recalling the history that has been handed down, where the secret of their strength lay. **Thou hadst a favour unto them** is the only explanation of Israel's success; see Deut. vii. 7, &c.

4. A sudden and impressive turn, with an emphatic use of the 3rd personal pronoun—'Thou, even Thou Thyself art my King'; the emphasis being strengthened by the use of the singular 'my.' The Psalmist speaks for the nation, but the individualistic form of speech brings home more closely the thought of God's personal relation to His people. The plural **deliverances** implies full and complete salvation.

5. Push down, as with the horns of the wild ox, Deut. xxxiii. 17, or with the horns of iron used symbolically by Zedekiah in 1 Kings xxii. 11. **Tread under** and trample down implies a similar metaphor drawn from the wild beast, Ps. lx. 12; Isa. xiv. 25.

Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.
For I will not trust in my bow, 6
Neither shall my sword save me.
But thou hast saved us from our adversaries, 7
And hast put them to shame that hate us.
In God have we made our boast all the day long, 8
And we will give thanks unto thy name for ever. [Selah

But now thou hast cast *us* off, and brought us to dishonour; 9
And goest not forth with our hosts.
Thou makest us to turn back from the adversary: 10
And they which hate us spoil for themselves.
Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for meat; 11
And hast scattered us among the nations.

---

6. This is one of the verses relied upon by those who maintain a Maccabaean authorship for the Psalm. The parallel is very close with 1 Macc. iii. 18, 19, 'victory in battle standeth not in the multitude of a host,' but Isaiah had taught the same lesson to Hezekiah long before, see 2 Kings xix.

7, 8. But—or perhaps better, 'For'—'it is Thou who hast saved us'; we, as well as our fathers, have experienced Thy goodness and in Thee we still put our trust.

9. Again a sudden change. **But now** is the best way of rendering a conjunction which properly implies addition, also, or 'furthermore.' Here it might be paraphrased 'and then Thou goest on to'; the very unexpectedness of the sequel and God's desertion of His own people constituting the force of the appeal. The phrase 'our armies' in A. V.—better, **hosts**, R. V.—gives a false impression if it be understood in the modern sense of a nation that maintains a standing army. The same word is used of the 'companies' that marched forth from Egypt, Exod. xii. 41, and is employed here in the same general sense.

10. For themselves, i. e. at their will, or to their heart's content.

11. Some are butchered; others sold for slaves. There is nothing distinctive in the phraseology here which would fix the period referred to. Deportation occurred two or three times under the Assyrians, and again at the time of the Babylonish captivity;

12 Thou sellest thy people for nought,
And hast not increased *thy wealth* by their price.
13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours,
A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.
14 Thou makest us a byword among the nations,
A shaking of the head among the peoples.
15 All the day long is my dishonour before me,
And the shame of my face hath covered me,
16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth;
By reason of the enemy and the avenger.
17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee,
Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.

---

again under the Persians at the time of Artaxerxes Ochus many Jews were sold as captives, and again by Antiochus Epiphanes.

12. A bitter reproach. 'Thine own people are sold—for a mere nothing; and Thou hast made no gain by the price paid for them.' The boldness of this mode of speech concerning God does not imply irreverence. It is paralleled in Isa. lii. 3, 5, and the meaning for religion is that the cause of God suffers by the overthrow of His people. This is hinted at in verse 16, is stated plainly in Isa. lii. 5, and was distinctly proved by the words of Rabshakeh, 2 Kings xviii. 19, &c.

13, 14. Shame and derision have come upon God's people and that from two quarters—**neighbours** and those **round about us,** such as Edom, Ammon and Moab, more or less akin to Israel, and the **nations,** understood of distinctly heathen peoples at a greater distance. Even allowing somewhat for poetical hyperbole, it is not easy to find a condition of things corresponding to this. The Maccabaean period is not suitable; perhaps none on the whole fits the description better than that of Sennacherib and Hezekiah.

15, 16. Again the Psalmist individualizes. Personal shame is most acutely felt; every Jew would feel outraged and disgraced by the taunts of a Rabshakeh. Those who insulted God's people did dishonour to Himself, and all blasphemy against God is personally resented by His faithful servants. See the close parallels of Ps. lxix. 6, 7, 9, 'the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me.'

17–19. The assertion of national innocence which follows is striking and presents some difficulties. It forms the strongest argument for a Maccabaean date, as the utterance of a martyr-church-nation. Of no period before the Exile could it be said that

Our heart is not turned back, 18
Neither have our steps declined from thy way;
That thou hast sore broken us in the place of jackals, 19
And covered us with the shadow of death.
If we have forgotten the name of our God, 20
Or spread forth our hands to a strange god;
Shall not God search this out? 21
For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.
Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; 22
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? 23
Arise, cast *us* not off for ever.

Israel or Judah was free from the taint of idolatry. But then of no period at all can the language of these verses be said to be true, if taken in its full strength. It must be comparative fidelity that is here asserted, as is suggested by verse 19, 'that Thou shouldest have (thus) sore broken us,' &c. In the time of Josiah, for example, or in the period of reform under Hezekiah such words might fairly be used on the part of the nation when striving to be loyal to the covenant with Jehovah. They were not conscious of national apostasy such as would warrant so severe a punishment. **The place of jackals** and **the shadow of death** refer to the terrible devastation which had made of the country a desert.

20, 21. The national conscience is clear. The Psalmist makes bold to appeal to the Omniscient that the people have been worshipping Jehovah and trying to fulfil His law and have not 'spread forth hands' in prayer to any strange god. It may be rendered 'If we had forgotten, would not God have searched it out?'

22. If the translation **Yea** be preserved, the connexion is, 'Yea, Thou knowest that it is for our fidelity we suffer.' The rendering 'Nay but' is better; so far from having laid themselves open to such punishment, a sense as of Divine injustice oppresses them. Martyrdom in the Christian sense, as intended by Paul when he quoted these words in Rom. viii. 36, was not for the most part understood by the Jews; it was to them a hardship and an unintelligible one, that God's people should suffer.

23. This is shown by the bold apostrophe, **why sleepest thou?** A God who thus leaves His people to their fate must be slumbering. The Talmud tells us that in the time of John Hyrcanus these words were used in the temple in such a way as to cause him to

24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And forgettest our affliction and our oppression?
25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust:
Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.
26 Rise up for our help,
And redeem us for thy lovingkindness' sake.

45 For the Chief Musician; set to Shoshannim; *a Psalm* of the sons of Korah. Maschil. A Song of loves.

1 My heart overfloweth with a goodly matter:

---

rebuke the Levites who used them, saying, 'Does God sleep? Hath not the Scripture said, Behold He that keepeth Israel slumbereth not?' But the meaning of the words depends on the spirit in which they are used. The piety and confidence in God of this Psalmist was no less complete than that of Hyrcanus or the writer of Ps. cxxi. 4.

24–26. The 'sleeping' referred to is here explained as synonymous with 'hiding of the face' or apparent forgetfulness; and the 'awaking' is equivalent to 'rising up for the help' of a suffering yet faithful people. The plea that God would act 'for His own lovingkindness' sake' shows that verse 23 expresses the boldness of faith, not of scepticism.

Psalm XLV. A Royal Marriage-Song.

Two things seem tolerably clear about this Psalm. First, that its occasion was the marriage of a king, and secondly that the epithalamium far transcends its occasion. With the view that the Psalm is allegorical throughout, that it has no historical basis, but was primarily intended to refer to spiritual truth and the relation between God and His people, we have no sympathy, and such allegorizing exposition happily does not find the favour it once did. But it is almost equally certain that the Psalmist does idealize and spiritualize the event he celebrated. Not merely that he uses poetical hyperbole, nor that in customary Oriental fashion he glorifies the king and his surroundings, though both these features are present. But the position of this ode in the midst of a number of sacred songs, chiefly intended for temple-worship, goes far to show that in the intention of the writer, or at least in the opinion of the Jewish church, more was intended than meets the eye of the ordinary reader. A royal marriage—of a king with a king's daughter—amongst the chosen people Israel, could not be regarded as a mere secular alliance. If king and queen

I speak the things which I have made touching the king:

---

understood their position, their union was encompassed by associations and fraught with issues much more important than those upon which a conventional court-poet would descant at Tyre or Damascus or Nineveh. And though the sacred lessons of the event are not worked out by the Psalmist, they are suggested, and the instinct of later generations, from the Targum writers onwards, has not been at fault in surmising that 'a greater than Solomon is here.' But how far and in what sense that deeper significance is to be admitted, is a question to which sound exegesis will be very careful in giving an answer.

One proof that the historical occasion was not all-important in the mind of the Psalmist is to be found in the difficulty of determining who is intended and what period is referred to. A Psalm which by competent exegetes has been referred to Solomon, to Ahab, to Jehoram, to Jeroboam II, to a Persian monarch, to a Syrian Alexander and to Ptolemy Philadelphus, cannot have been intended to celebrate with any minute accuracy the immediate and local glories of any king. The oldest and for long the prevailing view, still advocated by some able critics, refers the Psalm to the marriage of Solomon with an Egyptian princess, 1 Kings iii. 1. The mention of a daughter of Tyre has suggested the name of Ahab, who also possessed a palace of ivory, 1 Kings xxii. 39. Delitzsch defends with skill his theory that the marriage of Jehoram with Athaliah is intended. Finally, Cheyne argues in favour of Ptolemy Philadelphus, an Egyptian sovereign who did indeed patronize and promote literature, but who slew two of his own brothers and married his sister. Some critics, who are not satisfied to assign an early date to the Psalm, consider that Solomon is here celebrated by a later Psalmist who idealizes the traditions of 'Solomon in all his glory.' The choice seems to lie between this view and the supposition that one of the kings of the later monarchy is referred to, whose royal descent and status and privileges are dwelt upon, rather than any remarkable excellence of personal character.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 8, 9) is in harmony with the general tenor of Jewish interpretation in applying the words of verse 6 to the Messiah. The figure of marriage is used both in the Old and New Testaments to symbolize the covenant-relation between God and His people, and the author of a Psalm centuries before Christ, equally with Paul the writer of Eph. v. 23–32, would find nothing forced or unnatural in applying language used to describe the sacred relation between man and wife to the still more sacred relation between God and the Church.

My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.
2 Thou art fairer than the children of men;
Grace is poured into thy lips:
Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.
3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one,
Thy glory and thy majesty.

The title is long and composite. The clauses **For the Precentor, of the sons of Korah, Maschil,** are explained in the Introductions, pp. 14–16, 220, 221. **A Song of loves** describes the subject-matter and **set to 'Lilies'** indicates the tune to which the Psalm was sung.

1. The rhythm of this verse might be literally, if roughly rendered somewhat as follows—

'My heart overfloweth, goodly is the theme:
I am speaking, my work is for a king:
My tongue is a pen—a ready scribe.'

This exordium seems to point to a subject which inspires the writer as the mere wedding of a secular prince, however joyful and auspicious, would not influence a Hebrew Psalmist. Already at the outset he is lifted above the mere outward aspects of the event.

2. Verses 2-9 describe the bridegroom, his personal excellences, the dignity of his position, and the extent of his kingdom and influence.

Two qualities are selected for eulogy here; physical beauty and gracious speech and demeanour, both being understood as indications of a noble and truly royal character. **Therefore**—i. e. the Psalmist argues and all men may conclude—that the blessing of God rests upon this scion of a favoured house and will rest upon his descendants, **for ever.** This language is not to be understood as literally true of a particular individual, nor as the mere flattery of a courtier, but as a description of what a Jewish king should be, what the individual in question might be and to a considerable extent was.

3. Verses 3-5 strike a martial note. It does not follow that the king was a noted warrior, or that he was about to enter on a campaign. He is addressed as a 'mighty hero,' and the Psalmist in prophetic spirit anticipates victory for his arms and bids him use his power righteously and well. R. V. shows that 'glory and majesty' are attributes with which this king is to gird himself, just as he girds himself with the sword and other insignia of royalty. The words used are such as can properly apply only to a king who is God's vicegerent.

And in thy majesty ride on prosperously, 4
Because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness:
And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.
Thine arrows are sharp; 5
The peoples fall under thee;
They are in the heart of the king's enemies.
Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: 6

---

4. Render, 'Pass through, ride on, in the cause of truth, humility and righteousness, and let thy right hand teach thee terrible things,' R. V. marg. The opening word **And in thy majesty** seems to have crept in by mistake from the last verse. It might well have been repeated for the sake of emphasis, but the construction does not readily admit of this. The king is bidden to use his strength not only to defend the true and the right, but in all kindly clemency to care for the meek, i. e. the oppressed who cannot, or will not assert themselves. If this be his aim, the poet exhorts him to put forth all his energy and he shall be able to perform awe-inspiring deeds. The phraseology here again is more properly used of God, see 2 Sam. vii. 23, Isa. lxiv. 3, and of the king as God's representative.

5. The language here is condensed and abrupt, the second line forming a kind of parenthesis between the first and third. The R. V., however, gives the meaning well, and the vigour of the Psalmist's 'rapid pen' is obvious. First the arrows are seen hurtling through the air, then the hostile ranks are thinned as one enemy after another falls, lastly the shafts are found to have penetrated the very hearts of the king's foes.

6. The Psalmist now turns more specifically to the king's moral qualities, which are described from the ideal point of view. In this and the following verse is described what every Jewish king ought to be and it is hoped this king may be, perhaps is. The translation of the first line has been much debated, on the score of text, grammar and theology. If the received text be correct, the following renderings are possible.

a. **Thy throne, O God,** as in A. V., R. V. text, the versions and all the older commentators. If the Psalm is not directly Messianic, however, this direct address to the king as Elohim is strangely bold. To say that the judges were sometimes described as Elohim (Exod. xxi. 6, &c.), if it be true that they were; or that the house of David shall be 'as God,' Zech. xii. 8; or that the word Elohim is sometimes used in a secondary and lower sense—is hardly enough to warrant this direct address to the king in the vocative, O Elohim! *b.* 'God is thy throne' or 'thy throne is

A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom.
7 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness:
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
8 All thy garments *smell of* myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia;

God'—two ways of saying that the monarchy is divinely founded and supported. But the first is a very awkward way of expressing such a truth and it is questionable whether the second is idiomatically admissible. *c.* Some of the best authorities favour the rendering of R. V. marg. 'Thy throne is the throne of God.' This interpretation, if not the simplest and most obvious, is most in harmony with verse 7, with the rest of the Psalm and the usage of O. T. It reminds the king of his theocratic dignity, that he rules in virtue of Divine authority and ought to govern in accordance with this fundamental thought of Israelitish monarchy, as laid down e. g. in 2 Sam. vii.

In Heb. i. 8 the LXX is quoted, and the Greek permits (1) Thy throne, O God, (2) God is thy throne, (3) Thy throne is God, as possible renderings. Almost all ancient commentators take it for granted that (1) is the meaning. Bishop Westcott, however, argues for (2) and contends that the argument of the writer of Hebrews is perhaps more cogent if the office and endowment of the Son are described as Divine, than if the Divine name be ascribed to Him, for this latter 'would obscure the thought.' It must certainly be said that in interpreting the Hebrew and expounding the Psalm, either Elohim is used abruptly and strangely in its direct application to the king, even in its lower sense, as in R. V. text, or better, in the present writer's judgement, the translation of R. V. margin should be accepted.

7. The phrase **God, thy God** in an Elohistic Psalm stands for the more natural and normal 'Jehovah, thy God' elsewhere. The occurrence of this phrase here is an additional argument for refusing to believe that the king is called Elohim and for adopting the rendering advocated above.

'Anoint with the oil of gladness' does not refer to the consecration of the king to his office, but to the rejoicings of the marriage-day and the general tokens of prosperity, symbolized by oil; compare 'oil of joy' in Isa. lxi. 3.

8. The spices here mentioned must not be confounded with the myrrh and aloes of modern commerce. **Myrrh** was an Arabic balsam; **aloes** the product of an aromatic Indian tree, now known as eagle-wood; the word translated **cassia** is not the same as that in Exod. xxx. 24, an ingredient of the sacred oil, but

Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made
thee glad.
Kings' daughters are among thy honourable women: 9
At thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir.
Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; 10
Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;
So shall the king desire thy beauty: 11
For he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.
And the daughter of Tyre *shall be there* with a gift; 12
Even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.

---

indicates a powdered fragrant bark, akin to cinnamon. Spicery and unguents are both characteristic of Oriental festivity.

The interior of the king's palace is magnificent with inlaid ivory; music—the word is unusual, but there is no doubt that R. V. correctly gives the meaning—sounds through the halls as the royal bridegroom arrives.

9. One element of dignity remains to be mentioned, the numerous highborn wives of the monarch. The blending of actual with ideal is here most marked. Polygamy was, however, practised by patriarchs and kings and was permitted, though not directly sanctioned in O. T. The title used for the queen-consort, who occupies the place of honour, is a late one connected with the Persian, see Neh. ii. 6; Dan. v. 23. It is possible, however, that this word, like that for 'stringed instruments,' is a mark of North Palestinian dialect.

Ophir has not been certainly identified. Probably the gold was found in Eastern Arabia, though conjecture has connected the name of Solomon (see 1 Kings xxvii. 28) with the very ancient gold-mines of Zimbabwe in Mashona-land.

10, 11. The bride is addressed in terms appropriate to a foreigner who had as yet hardly seen her husband, but whose duty it was to make his home and religion her own. The typical or allegorical meaning of the Psalm cannot appropriately be pressed in detail, when the references to Oriental ideas of marriage are concerned.

Render, 'For he is thy lord and do thou homage unto him.' The lordship intended is that recognized authority of the husband (Gen. xviii. 12), which demanded submission from the wife. To translate **Lord** is misleading and in conjunction with the word **worship** tends to confuse the allegorical with the literal meaning.

12. The interpretation of this verse which would make it one sentence, addressed to the queen as a Tyrian princess, 'And,

13 The king's daughter within *the palace* is all glorious:
Her clothing is inwrought with gold.
14 She shall be led unto the king in broidered work:
The virgins her companions that follow her
Shall be brought unto thee.
15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be led:
They shall enter into the king's palace.
16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,
Whom thou shalt make princes in all the earth.
17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations:

O daughter of Tyre, the rich shall intreat thy favour,' though influentially supported, is open to many objections. The verse is best understood as consisting of two clauses, one predicate serving for both. Render:—

'And the daughter of Tyre shall seek thy favour with a gift,
Yea the richest among the peoples shall thus do homage.'

The important service rendered by Hiram to Solomon probably suggested the idea that the city of Tyre, the wealthiest of all the neighbouring powers, should thus pay respect to the new king and queen.

13. R. V. makes clear the meaning of **within**; the inner part of the house belongs to the women, and the queen's state apartments are referred to, from which she passes to the presence-chamber to meet her lord.

14, 15. The state procession is here described. The 'embroidered work' here mentioned has been understood (1) of the variegated carpets on which the queen walks, (2) of the tapestry-lined rooms through which she passes, and (3) of the embroidered raiment in which she is clothed. The last explanation is to be preferred. Bridesmaids in considerable numbers would form not only part of the wedding procession, but afterwards of the royal household. References to these marriage customs are to be found in Jer. vii. 34; 1 Macc. ix. 37; Matt. xxv. 1, and in the Song of Songs.

16, 17. A closing address to the king. The offspring of the marriage is to be numerous and distinguished. The Psalmist speaks as a prophet and partly wishes, partly foretells, that the memory of the prince he celebrates shall be widespread and long continued. His sons are to be **princes** not only 'in all the land,' as some would render it, but **in all the earth**; for **the peoples**, i. e. nations generally, will in future days praise or give thanks to him as a renowned and beneficent monarch.

Therefore shall the peoples give thee thanks for ever and ever.

For the Chief Musician; *a Psalm* of the sons of Korah; set to Alamoth. A Song. **46**

God is our refuge and strength, 1
A very present help in trouble.

Some difficulty may perhaps be experienced in these closing verses and in other parts of the Psalm, because the words used seem more appropriate in reference to God rather than to man. The solution is not to be found by making the Psalm wholly allegorical or mystical, nor by intermingling, which means confusing, the literal and spiritual methods of interpretation, but by steadfastly holding to the literal and historical throughout, with the understanding that the king here addressed is viewed not so much in his personal and individual character, but the head of a theocracy and in theory at least a representative of God upon the earth. This facilitates the Messianic *application* of the words, without introducing the numerous difficulties raised by a directly Messianic interpretation and an allegorization in detail. On the whole subject, see Introd. to vol. ii.

PSALM XLVI. THE NATION'S STRONGHOLD.

This and the two following Psalms may be assigned with considerable confidence to the time of Hezekiah, when Jerusalem was so seriously threatened by the army of Sennacherib and so wonderfully delivered, according to Isaiah's prophecy, by a striking Divine intervention. The arguments in favour of this date are such as these. (1) The language points more definitely than is usual with the Psalmists to an historical event of a notable character. (2) Unquestionably the event which most fully corresponds to the phraseology employed is the occasion mentioned. There is indeed little choice. The view of Delitzsch that the victory of Berachah gained over Moab, Ammon and Edom (2 Chron. xx) is referred to, is the best alternative, but it is open to the objection that in these Psalms the city of Jerusalem itself is the centre both of the danger and the triumph. The invasion of Judah by Syria and Israel in the time of Ahaz (Isa. vii), which has also been suggested, is improbable on several grounds. (3) The close correspondence between these Psalms and the language of Isaiah (chs. xxx, xxxvii, &c.) both in general tone and to some extent in detailed phraseology. It may be added (4) that the consensus of critical opinion is in this case more united than usual; though it is admitted that no more than strong probability can be shown, and

2 Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,
And though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas;
3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.
[Selah

---

some critics steadfastly refuse to admit that any Psalms are pre-Exilic.

The keynote of this Psalm is struck in the opening verse—'God is our stronghold.' It is repeated in the refrain which occurs in verses 7 and 11. The structure of the Psalm would lead us to expect the refrain at the end of verse 3 also, the thrice repeated Selah marking out the several stanzas. The first of these stanzas, verses 1–3, is general in its assertion that God is the refuge of His people; the second, verses 4–7, refers to the recent deliverance; while the third, 8–11, becomes general again and anticipates the vindication of Jehovah as the God of the whole earth. The phrase in the title, **set to Alamoth**, probably corresponds to our 'soprano.' This may mean that it was intended for women's voices, but more probably refers to the instruments used; see 1 Chron. xv. 20, 'with psalteries set to Alamoth.' We might perhaps compare the modern viola, violoncello, double bass, as illustrations of stringed instruments of different tone and quality.

Luther's fondness for this Psalm is well known; in the sixteenth century his spirited version *Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott* brought home the ancient truth to modern times. Wesley's dying words, 'The best of all is, God is with us,' were indirectly inspired by the language of the refrain, verses 7 and 11.

1. The two words used in the first line mean respectively 'shelter' (see Job xxiv. 8) and 'stability' (Job xii. 16; Ps. xxx. 7). The idea is well brought out by Isaiah in chs. xxviii and xxx, where he urges the people not to trust in alliance with Egypt or any other nation, but to find their stronghold in Jehovah.

No better English translation of the second line could be adopted than that of R. V., but the words run literally, 'A help in straits is he found exceedingly,' and the conjugation and tense of the word used for 'found' point to an actual occurrence in history in which God has shown Himself to be what the word describes.

2, 3. These verses as they stand must be read together. In verse 2 render 'moved *into* the heart of the seas.' If, as is probable, the refrain originally appeared at the end of verse 3, as in 7 and 11, we should read in 3, 'Let its waters roar and foam; let the mountains quake with their proud swelling! Still we fear not, for God is with us.'

There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city 4
of God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: 5
God shall help her, and that right early.
The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved: 6
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.
The LORD of hosts is with us; 7

The confidence here expressed has been engendered by the recent Divine manifestation. It needs a prophet's faith and insight to be thus confident *before* help had been vouchsafed and when ruin seemed imminent. The philosopher pictures the just man as impregnable in himself, wrapping himself in his own virtue (see the well-known passage in Horace, *Odes*, iii. 3. 7); the saint finds his strength in God.

4. Twice in the Book of Isaiah is the presence of Jehovah compared to a river; in viii. 6, where 'Siloah's brook' is contrasted with the great river of Assyria; and in xxxiii. 21, where 'Jehovah is with us in majesty, a place of broad rivers and streams.' The Psalmist's use of the figure differs slightly from both. But the idea is fundamentally the same: God's presence is the joy and refreshment, as well as the defence of His people. In construction this verse is an exclamation—'A river! its channels make glad,' &c., the next verse giving the explanation. In N. T. phraseology the stream is that of 'grace.'

5. R. V. preserves in its text the old idiomatic rendering, **and that right early.** But its marginal rendering 'at the dawn of morning,' or 'when the morn appeareth,' gives the meaning of the Hebrew better and suggests the morning of deliverance mentioned in Isa. xxxvii. 36. It also preserves the parallel with such passages as Pss. xxx. 5, cxxx. 6, &c.

6. The effect of what has been called the 'staccato' movement in this verse is heightened if we read, **nations raged, kingdoms were moved,** &c. There is no article in the original. The **voice** is that of thunder, the 'melting' is the dissolution of all opposition in abject fear.

7. For the full meaning of the phrase *Yahweh Tsebāōth*, **Jehovah of hosts,** see detached note, p. 359. It is found more than 120 times in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and several times in the Psalms of the second and third Books. Whatever the origin and history of the expression, its general significance points, as the LXX translation indicates, to God All-Sovereign, whilst the **God of**

The God of Jacob is our refuge. [Selah

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.
9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariots in the fire.
10 Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.
11 The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. [Selah

47 For the Chief Musician; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.

1 O clap your hands, all ye peoples;

Jacob is the God of the nation. For **with us** compare the name Immanuel, 'God is with us,' in Isa. vii. 14, viii. 8, 10.

The word for **refuge** is not the same as in verse 1, it means 'high tower,' R.V. marg., or high fortress.

8. The Psalmist assumes from time to time the position of a teacher; compare xxxiv. 11, 'Come, ye children, hearken unto me,' &c. The invitation here is chiefly intended for the nations around. The second line of this verse rather means, 'Who hath done astonishing things in the earth.' It is not the destructive element in God's intervention on which the Psalmist lays stress.

9. He pictures rather the overthrow of the great military power of Assyria before the comparatively unwarlike people of Judah as a victory of peace; much as in the early part of the nineteenth century the overthrow of Napoleon was regarded.

The word translated **chariots** is not the usual one for war-chariot. It means rather 'waggons' as in Gen. xlv. 19; some versions read 'shields.' But 1 Sam. xvii. 20 shows that these vehicles, whether they corresponded to what we call baggage-waggons or not, were associated with war.

10, 11. Be still, or 'Desist,' cease your vain strivings: R.V. marg. 'Let be.' The God of Jacob is the God of the whole earth. He means to show Himself as such, and the nations must learn that they are but mortal men. Ps. ix. 20.

PSALM XLVII. THE KING OF NATIONS.

This Psalm should be read in connexion with xlvi and xlviii, and it may be both compared and contrasted with them. It

Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
For the LORD Most High is terrible;
He is a great King over all the earth.
He shall subdue the peoples under us,
And the nations under our feet.
He shall choose our inheritance for us,
The excellency of Jacob whom he loved. [Selah
God is gone up with a shout,

---

exhibits the same exultation and traces it to the same source. But it is less definitely historical, and dwells upon what may be called the Divine side of the event celebrated. The theme is—God is King, let Israel and all nations triumph in His victorious supremacy. It is used by the Jews at the Feast of Trumpets (Num. xxix. 1), and by the Christian Church on Ascension Day. It may be divided into two stanzas or strophes, 1-4 and 5-9, but this short and vigorous lyric is itself but one trumpet-blast, with many ringing, melodious notes.

1. When Saul was appointed king, he was greeted with shouting and the cry 'Let the king live!' (1 Sam. x. 24). When Joash came to the crown, the same cry was made and 'all the people clapped their hands,' 2 Kings xi. 12. The two kinds of demonstration are here united to celebrate Jehovah as God of the nations. The rendering should, of course, be **peoples** (R. V.), not 'people' (A. V.).

2. *Yahweh 'Elyon*, **the LORD Most High,** unites two names of God, the former indicating the covenant God of Israel, the latter the sovereign of the whole earth.

3, 4. Four various renderings are possible of the tenses in these verses, and all have found supporters. We might render 'He subdued,' 'He hath subdued,' 'He subdueth,' or 'He shall subdue,' the peoples under us; while some able critics render the tense in verse 4 by the optative, 'May he choose!' Without discussing the matter in detail, there are good reasons for preferring the translation of R. V. marg., 'He subdueth—chooseth—loveth'; understanding that a general truth is intended, with special reference to the recent deliverance and its illustration of the broad principle of God's care for His people. The least satisfactory view is that which makes the passage refer to the original settlement in Canaan.

The land is the **inheritance** of Israel, inasmuch as he is God's son and heir, and the **excellency,** or 'pride,' of Jacob, since he boasts of it and exults in it as God's gracious gift.

5. The anthropomorphism which represents God as 'going up'

The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
6 Sing praises to God, sing praises:
Sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
7 For God is the King of all the earth:
Sing ye praises with understanding.
8 God reigneth over the nations:
God sitteth upon his holy throne.
9 The princes of the peoples are gathered together
To be the people of the God of Abraham:
For the shields of the earth belong unto God;
He is greatly exalted.

---

or 'coming down' in relation to the affairs of men is drawn from the idea of an earthly sovereign who may be said to come down as from his throne to investigate and intervene (Gen. xi. 5, 7), to administer justice among his subjects or to overthrow his enemies (Isa. lxiv. 1, 3); and who, when battle is over and victory won, returns to his palace in triumph. The ascension into heaven is naturally suggested by the phrase of this verse, see lxviii. 18.

6, 7. The word here repeated four times and translated **Sing praises** refers to instrumental rather than vocal music, or at least implies that the singing is accompanied. An alternative rendering would be, 'Make ye melody.' R. V. marg., 'in a skilful psalm,' is better than the text **with understanding.** The note shows that the word 'Maschil' is that found in the title of Ps. xlv and many other Psalms.

8. Render, 'God hath become King—hath taken His seat'—since here a fact rather than a general truth is intended, recent history having proved that Jehovah has asserted His right and vindicated His claim to the homage of the nations.

9. A verse of double length brings the Psalm to a close with a noble and inspiring prophecy. It pictures a great gathering of the nations with their leaders at their head, to render homage to the God of Israel. The rendering of R. V., To be **the people of the God of Abraham,** is the only possible one, if the received text be retained, the marginal rendering, 'Unto the people,' implying a strained construction. It is more likely that the LXX and other versions are right, that a preposition has dropped out and that we should read, 'Together with the people of the God of Abraham.'

shields means princes, see Ps. lxxxix. 18, where 'shield' and 'king' are used synonymously. By a fine artistic touch the

A Song; a Psalm of the sons of Korah. 48

Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, 1
In the city of our God, in his holy mountain.
Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, 2
Is mount Zion, *on* the sides of the north,

---

lyric closes upon the lofty key-note, 'Very highly is He become exalted!'

PSALM XLVIII. THE NATION'S SECURITY.

In the trilogy of Psalms, xlvi and xlviii are companions, with the shorter and more general Ps. xlvii interposed between them. The language of this Psalm points even more emphatically to the overthrow of Sennacherib's army as the occasion of all three. One or two slight difficulties in the way of this reference are dealt with in the notes. The Psalm is divided into two parts by the 'Selah' at the end of verse 8: the former part describing the deliverance effected, and the latter the reflections and lessons suggested. It is used on Whit Sunday in a large part of the Church Catholic, being understood as describing the glory of the Church founded at Pentecost and the secret of its strength and beauty.

1. The opening verse shows that not so much the glory of the Church-nation is celebrated, as the glory of the God from whom her whole glory is reflected.

highly: rather, 'Exceeding worthy to be praised.'

his holy mountain had come to be almost synonymous with the city which was situated upon it.

2. Jerusalem, Florence, Athens, Rome—each has its own characteristic loveliness, but the first is still unsurpassed among earth's fair cities. It is here described as 'Raised aloft in beauty.' Stanley's description, in his *Sinai and Palestine*, ch. iii, of the 'mountain city, breathing a mountain air and enthroned on a mountain fastness,' is well known and often quoted. With this should be compared Dr. G. A. Smith's remarks on its possessing 'none of the natural conditions of a great city' (*Hist. Geog. Holy Land*, p. 319).

on **the sides of the north:** a difficult phrase. Many modern commentators would interpret in the light of Isa. xiv. 13, where 'the uttermost parts of the north' indicates the sacred mountain in the extreme north which in Assyrian mythology was the abode of the gods, like the Greek Olympus. But such a reference is quite out of place here. Cheyne regards the words as a gloss which crept in through a scribe's regarding the phrase in Isaiah as a parallel passage; but this is to cut a knot which it is hard to untie. Taking the words as they stand, the region **Beautiful in**

The city of the great King.
3 God hath made himself known in her palaces for a refuge.
4 For, lo, the kings assembled themselves,
They passed by together.
5 They saw it, then were they amazed;
They were dismayed, they hasted away.
6 Trembling took hold of them there;
Pain, as of a woman in travail.
7 With the east wind
Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish.

---

elevation, the joy of the whole earth is either described in three clauses—(1) Mount Zion, city of David; (2) the sides of the north, viz. Mount Moriah and the temple; and (3) the city of the great King, Jerusalem proper; or better, as Delitzsch suggests, in two clauses—(1) Zion, the temple-hill at the north-east corner, mentioned by itself, with (2) Jerusalem, the city proper, lying as if at its feet.

3. Render, 'for a high fortress,' as in xlvi. 7.

4–7. These verses point to a definite, sudden and remarkable deliverance. The chief difficulty in referring them to the Assyrian invasion is the mention of **kings** in verse 4. but it is not unduly straining the phrase to apply it to the vassal-kings of Sennacherib. He is represented in Isa. x. 8 as saying, 'Are not my princes all of them kings?' Delitzsch's reference to the confederate forces at Beracah (2 Chron. xx) fails in appropriateness, inasmuch as the attack of Moab and Ammon was not directly against Jerusalem.

4. They passed by together: i. e. over the frontier, from stage to stage of the hostile expedition, as described in Isa. x. 28–32.

5. They saw. The city is not mentioned, but is obviously intended. There was nothing to correspond with this in the Moabite invasion. Caesar came, saw, conquered; Rabshakeh saw, was amazed, fled away.

6, 7. Two striking figures are employed to describe the panic and overthrow—the anguish of a woman in travail, and a storm shattering the strongest vessels. Tarshish stands, in the uncertain geography of the time, for a maritime country in the extreme west (Tartessos in south-west Spain?): but the phrase **ships of Tarshish** here and Isa. ii. 16 is used to describe large vessels generally; compare our 'East Indiaman.'

With the east wind. 'The day of the east wind' (Isa. xxvii. 8) is a proverbial expression for the most formidable kind of tempest.

As we have heard, so have we seen 8
In the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God:
God will establish it for ever. [Selah
We have thought on thy lovingkindness, O God, 9
In the midst of thy temple.
As is thy name, O God, 10
So is thy praise unto the ends of the earth:
Thy right hand is full of righteousness.
Let mount Zion be glad, 11
Let the daughters of Judah rejoice,
Because of thy judgements.
Walk about Zion, and go round about her: 12
Tell the towers thereof.
Mark ye well her bulwarks, 13
Consider her palaces;
That ye may tell it to the generation following.

---

8. As it has been in the past, so we have experienced it in the present, and therefore we hope for the future. Zion's God is still our own.

9. The word translated **thought** means originally 'to compare,' 'to liken,' hence it stands for the brooding contemplation which studies all the aspects of a subject and prepares the way for resolution and action. The sanctuary is the place for such pondering.

10. God has, so to speak, vindicated His reputation; the nations now may learn what Israel has long known concerning their righteous Ruler.

11. The Psalmist next turns to Judah, who has chiefly benefited. **Mount Zion** is the capital, **daughters of Judah** the surrounding villages. **Judgements** means acts of righteous interposition such as that which overtook the army of the haughty invader.

12. The lately besieged inhabitants especially are to learn their lesson. **Tell,** i. e. 'count,' not as the enemy had done in derision of the city's feeble defences (Isa. xxxiii. 18), but with the pride of those who know that their real strength is in the presence of Jehovah.

13. Consider: i. e. the lesson to be learned from the fact that after such an attack these palaces and bulwarks still stand intact. Compare Isa. xxxvii. 33, 'He shall not come unto this city, . . . nor cast a mount against it,' &c. The story is to be told to children's children as a proof of the statement with which the Psalm closes.

14 For this God is our God for ever and ever:
He will be our guide *even* unto death.

49 For the Chief Musician; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.

1 Hear this, all ye peoples;

---

14. There is no doubt about the general meaning of this beautiful verse. But the Hebrew will not bear the translation **unto death,** nor is this the phrase we should expect here. Many conjectures have been made, but if the present text is to be retained, the most probable rendering is:—

'For such is God, even our God:
He will guide us for evermore. *Al-muth.*'

The last word causes the difficulty, and it may refer to a tune as in the title of Ps. ix, *Al-muth-labben*: or with a different vocalization, *set to Alamoth*, as in Ps. xlvi. If the latter explanation is accepted, the word belongs to the title of the next Psalm. The almost endless variations in the versions and the commentators testify to a difficulty which cannot now be entirely removed, but no change of rendering seriously affects the meaning.

PSALM XLIX. THE VANITY OF EARTHLY PROSPERITY.

As the interest of the three preceding Psalms was historical and national, so the importance of this is entirely abstract and moral. It is confessedly, emphatically didactic. A problem of life is exercising the Psalmist which others faced in their own fashion, as in Pss. xxxvii and lxxiii. None of the philosophers even yet have solved it—the complete harmonizing of the material and moral elements in human life, the adjustment of the balance between personal character and outward lot and condition. It seemed to the Psalmist, as to so many others, that earthly wealth and influence rule; that the rich man is the strong man, whatever his character; and that material forces have the upper hand in human affairs. A second thought shows him that the balance is redressed by death. The richest and strongest must die; no wealth or influence will purchase immunity from the common lot. Hence 'man that is in honour' must learn his lesson, and those not similarly favoured need not doubt or despair of the triumph of righteousness.

Whether the thought of this Psalmist goes further, has been questioned. Whether, that is, he has a glimpse of a state beyond the grave in which the inequalities of the present will be completely removed, whether we are to take into account not only death but that which comes after death. The answer given

Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:
Both low and high, 2
Rich and poor together.
My mouth shall speak wisdom; 3
And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.

---

by different interpreters varies. The fact that there is such a difference proves that the glimpse of a future state, if gained at all, can have been only a passing one, and the language in which it is expressed must be vague and ambiguous. So we shall find it in expounding the verses in detail; and therefore, while not excluding the possibility of the Psalmist's hope on a point concerning which there had been no express revelation, it is clear that little can be built upon phraseology, the exact meaning of which is still debated.

The Psalm itself gives no clue as to its date, except that verses 3 and 4 would point to a period—say about the time of Hezekiah—when teachers known as 'the wise,' or gnomic moralists who uttered ethical maxims on the conduct of life, taught and flourished. The parallel passages in Job and Proverbs probably point in the same direction.

After an introduction, longer and more formal than usual, verses 1–4, the Psalm divides itself into two parts, each ending with the same words, verses 12 and 20. The same thesis is propounded in both—that wealth cannot save from death, but the earlier half of the Psalm deals more fully with the present life and the second with the power of Sheol. The style of the Psalm is fresh and vigorous, and the treatment of the subject, within the limits laid down, powerful and impressive.

1, 2. The point of view of the Psalmist is universal. He addresses not Jews, but the nations at large. The 'wisdom-literature' of the O. T. is characterized by this wider outlook upon the world and life, and the topics discussed in this Psalm concern not Judaism only, but humanity.

The second line might be rendered 'All ye that dwell in this fleeting world.' Lessons are to be announced which concern the children of mankind as a whole and the sons of (eminent) men in particular. So we might vainly try to paraphrase the Hebrew, in which two words for 'man' are used, excellently paraphrased in **low and high**, i. e. low-born and high-born, together.

3, 4. Four words here used are characteristic of the 'wisdom-literature.' Wisdom and understanding have the special meaning which attaches to the proverbial philosophy characteristic of the wise; see especially Prov. i–ix, a passage of later date than

4 I will incline mine ear to a parable:
I will open my dark saying upon the harp.
5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil,
When iniquity at my heels compasseth me about?
6 They that trust in their wealth,
And boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;
7 None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him:
8 (For the redemption of their soul is costly,
And must be let alone for ever:)

---

some other parts of the book. The words translated **parable** and **dark saying** (or, 'riddle') are often joined together, as in Ps. lxxviii. 2; Prov. i. 6; they refer to the form in which the instruction of wisdom was conveyed. The terms 'proverb' and 'aphorism' would convey the meaning to modern ears.

5. Wherefore should I fear? &c. The Psalmist had evidently himself been tempted to fear in days when evil men had the mastery over him. Such temptation, always strong, is of course indefinitely stronger in countries where arbitrary power prevails and there is no even-handed administration of justice such as is taken for granted in modern civilized Western States.

In the second line, R.V. text and margin lead to the same point, though in the text the emphasis lies upon evil, in the margin upon evil men, as dogging the Psalmist's steps and seeking to trip him up and overthrow him.

6, 7. The temptation is met by the thought of the strict limitations of the power of wealth. One thing the rich man cannot do, redeem any friend—a suggested and not improbable emendation would give 'redeem himself'—from the power of death. 'Death lays his icy hand on kings.'

Money cannot purchase the boon of life. Under the Mosaic law, a man whose ox had gored a neighbour to death was liable to lose his life, but he might save himself by paying a fine or ransom, Exod. xxi. 28-32. But a murderer might not thus purchase immunity from punishment, Num. xxxv. 31. In this case no **brother**, i. e. friend, however dear, can be saved from death by the wealthy man; still less, of course, can he save himself.

8. The A. V. rendering, 'And it ceaseth for ever,' is distinctly inferior to the older P. B. V., 'so that he must let that alone for ever,' revived in more accurate form in R. V.

soul means 'life,' and to avoid ambiguity, the latter word is to be preferred in the text.

That he should still live alway,
That he should not see corruption.
For he seeth that wise men die,
The fool and the brutish together perish,
And leave their wealth to others.
Their inward thought is, *that* their houses *shall continue* for ever,
And their dwelling places to all generations;
They call their lands after their own names.
But man abideth not in honour:
He is like the beasts that perish.

---

9. Render, 'That he should live on always,
That he should not see the grave,' i. e. die.

10. The connexion of thought here is not obvious at first. R. V. marg. shows that the translation in the text is not quite satisfactory, but the alternative presented is still less so. The choice lies between **For he seeth,** in the sense of 'he must see'; and 'Nay, surely he seeth' or 'must see.' The two renderings lead substantially to the same conclusion, but by means of two different interpretations, both legitimate, of the introductory particle.

The words well rendered **fool** and **brutish** mean the obstinately self-confident and the grossly stupid.

11. A very slight change in the order of letters in one word gives a reading which is followed by LXX, Targ., and all the earlier versions, see R. V. marg., 'Their graves are their houses for ever, their dwelling-places,' &c. This fits better with the next line, the word 'And' not being found in the original; it harmonizes better with the context, which is not concerned with the 'inward thought' of these men; and is more in accord with the general tenor of the Psalm. Some good authorities, moreover, question whether **inward thought** is a legitimate translation.

The last line adds a touch of irony. These men who have solemnly tried to perpetuate their memory by giving their names to large estates dwell each in his narrow house; a body for which 'a kingdom was too small a bound' finds now 'two paces of the vilest earth is room enough.'

12. With the above reading in verse 11, render here: 'And (so) man (being, or, however he be) in honour, abideth not.' His end, if he have no deeper and firmer foundation than his wealth on which to rest, is like that of the brutes that pass into silence.

13 This their way is their folly:
Yet after them men approve their sayings. [Selah
14 They are appointed as a flock for Sheol;
Death shall be their shepherd:
And the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;
And their beauty shall be for Sheol to consume, that there be no habitation for it.
15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol:
For he shall receive me. [Selah

---

13. This verse apparently belongs in thought to the previous part of the Psalm, and much is to be said for its transposition to a place before the refrain in verse 12. Taking the text as it is, the meaning seems to be: 'This is the way,' i. e. lot or condition, 'of them that are foolishly self-confident, and of those who after them approve their sayings,' *lit.* 'find pleasure in their mouth.' They, and all who are like them, end in corruption.

14. A striking verse, which R. V. for the first time makes plain in English. These men pass into Sheol like a flock of sheep, Death is their grim shepherd, their 'form'—not their **beauty,** but all that appears of them—is food for the grave: it no longer needs a dwelling-place, it vanishes into dust.

In this exposition, however, we have passed over the clause, 'In the morning the upright shall rule over them.' A contrast is clearly intended, but its exact scope is not clear. To find here an allusion to the resurrection-morning would be an anachronism, yet on the earth this superiority could only be made manifest by some vindication of the character of the righteous in the dawn of that new day which is to illumine the earth. This appears to be the meaning, but the words are few and obscure.

15. The same uncertainty attaches to the meaning of this verse. But if we do not ask questions which the Psalmist never professed to answer, because the light of revelation did not enable him to do so, the positive truth which he would express is plain. God only can deal with the power of Sheol, He alone can 'redeem' from it, in the sense of arresting or over-ruling its tyrannous hand. I leave myself with Him, He will take me. It is when we ask How, Where, When? that the Psalmist is silent, wisely and necessarily so. Thus the teaching of this Psalm corresponds with that of Ps. xvi; the writer enjoys communion with God and is content to leave all issues in His hands. An allusion to the

Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, 16
When the glory of his house is increased:
For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; 17
His glory shall not descend after him.
Though while he lived he blessed his soul, 18
And men praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself,
He shall go to the generation of his fathers; 19
They shall never see the light.
Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, 20
Is like the beasts that perish.

---

story of Enoch, Gen. v. 24, may be intended. On the other hand, no one can certainly say that more *must be* meant than deliverance from the peril of premature and violent death to which the self-confident wicked were liable.

16, 17. The Psalmist returns to the 'fear' by which he was haunted, see verse 5. He has been delivered himself from this spectre, and as a teacher he would deliver others. If death forms the term of the rich man's wealth and influence, the oppressed need not fear the oppressor. The bubble disappears from the river, though the noise of the foam was great.

18. Better, in the present tense, 'Though in his life-time he blesseth his soul,' i.e. congratulates himself, 'counteth himself happy' (P.B.V.), and receives the congratulations of others, as successful men always do.

19. Of the three translations given in R.V. text and margin, the best is that of the text, for 'it' refers to the soul, and in English the meaning is made clearer by saying **He.** On the other hand, in the second line we prefer the margin, 'He goeth to his fathers, Who shall never more see the light.'

20. The refrain as in verse 10, with the significant addition, **and understandeth not.** The reader is supposed to bear in mind throughout the Psalm that by the man who is in honour, i.e. possessed of outward splendour, is intended one who can boast of this and nothing more. He has no understanding of, or insight into, the real meaning of life. But here this is for the first time explicitly stated.

This distinction justifies the contrast drawn between the self-confident fool on the one hand, and on the other the upright as in verse 14, or the Psalmist himself as in verse 15. These latter are not freed from death entirely, for wise men die, verse 10; but they do not perish as do others; while the Psalmist has gained

50 A Psalm of Asaph.
1 God, *even* God, the LORD, hath spoken,

a bright though passing glimpse of possibilities in the future for those whom God 'redeems' and 'takes.'

PSALM L. TRUE SACRIFICE AND WORSHIP.

Another didactic Psalm; dealing, however, with Israel rather than the world, with questions of ritual and morals rather than of life and destiny. Like the preceding Psalm, it is original and vigorous in style, but this is marked by a stately sublimity of its own, which stamps it as belonging to the golden age of the nation. God is represented as coming to judgement, arraigning His people before Him that He may investigate the nature of their worship and service and set them in the right way. Especially is the subject of sacrifice set in its true light, as it appears in the searching glance of the Divine eye. The sacrifice of animals is not condemned nor slighted, but such sacrifices as many had been in the habit of offering are shown to be utterly unworthy of Him to whom they were presented, and of the spiritual worship which ought to characterize the true Israel. The moral and spiritual significance of ritual, and the absolute necessity of ordering the life and conduct of the worshippers in accordance with the character of a holy God, are insisted upon with the fervour and power characteristic of the true prophet.

The Psalm is ascribed to Asaph. The subject of Asaphic Psalms is more fully dealt with in the Introduction to Book III, but here it may be said that the title does not in any sense determine the date. Some of the Psalms which bear Asaph's name cannot have been written by the musician who figured in David's history, 1 Chron. xv. 16-19; probably none of them were so written. The phrase **of Asaph** is to be understood in the same way as 'of the sons of Korah,' to indicate a collection of Psalms bearing a name which was probably that of a musical guild. Internal evidence would mark out this Psalm as belonging to the eighth or the seventh century B. C., either to the time of Hosea and Micah or to the reformation of Josiah, more probably the former.

The Psalm easily divides itself into four parts: introduction, 1-6; the true nature of sacrifice, 7-15; denunciation of immorality, 16-21; conclusion, 22, 23.

1. God who appears in majesty for judgement is described here by three names, 'El, Elohim, Yahweh.' The words '*Elyon* and *Eloah* also occur in verses 14 and 22. The subject of the names of God is dealt with in a detached note, p. 358, and in the Introduction to vol. ii. The three names here united are not often thus found together, but see Joshua xxii. 22. The translation there adopted, 'The Lord, the God of gods,' is advocated by some in this verse

And called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the
going down thereof.
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, 2
God hath shined forth.
Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: 3
A fire shall devour before him,
And it shall be very tempestuous round about him.
He shall call to the heavens above, 4
And to the earth, that he may judge his people:
Gather my saints together unto me; 5
Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.
And the heavens shall declare his righteousness; 6

(R. V. marg.). Following the text, however, we have three names, of which two are easily distinguished. *Yahweh* is the God of special revelation to Israel, God of the sacred covenant, while both *El* and *Elohim* are general names for the Deity who rules the world. The conjunction of names of course identifies these two. The combination of sacred titles gives great dignity to the exordium, and the keynote of the Psalm is struck at the outset, that Israel's God is indeed the Judge of the whole earth.

2. Zion is God's dwelling-place, but the Psalm describes a special Epiphany, an unusual raying forth of his splendour. Compare 'shine forth' in another Asaphic Psalm, lxxx. 1.

3. The idea intended is better conveyed by present tenses, 'our God cometh,' 'a fire devoureth,' &c. (R. V. marg.). The change of tense in Hebrew gives a vividness to the picture, best reproduced in English by the use of the historic present. A storm attends a theophany, as in Ps. xviii and Hab. iii.

4. Heaven and earth are assessors in this great assize, as in the dramatic apostrophe of Micah, 'Let the hills hear thy voice. Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy,' vi. 1, 2.

5. It is only the elect people who are to be judged, though earth and skies are witnesses. Those who have received special privileges must render special account. **Saints** is explained by the second line of the verse, those who have entered into a special engagement with Jehovah, as He with them, who should therefore recognize the special obligations of this bond of love.

The covenant was made **by** (*lit.* 'upon') **sacrifice**, the sprinkling of blood sealing the solemn promise made, 'All that the Lord hath spoken will we do,' Exod. xxiv. 7.

6. Render, 'And the heavens declare . . . For God, He is Judge.'

For God is judge himself. [Selah

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak;
O Israel, and I will testify unto thee:
I am God, *even* thy God.
8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices;
And thy burnt offerings are continually before me.
9 I will take no bullock out of thy house,
Nor he-goats out of thy folds.
10 For every beast of the forest is mine,
And the cattle upon a thousand hills.
11 I know all the fowls of the mountains:

All this is introductory only, but the full painting in of so august a background is intended to heighten the solemnity of the indictment about to be preferred.

7. The word 'trial' hardly conveys a true idea of the scene. God's 'controversy' with His people is the solemn protest of One who has a right to punish disobedience without a word, but who condescends to register a complaint which must be accounted reasonable as soon as stated. Hence **testify unto** might be rendered 'witness against thee'; the charge to be made only needs to be uttered for its righteousness to be seen and recognized. Israel must acknowledge the claim of Him who is not only **God,** but **thy God.**

8. No complaint is made concerning the due observance of ritual. This has been fully attended to; we need not say too fully, as if **continually** implied something of the weariness of multitudinous sacrifices described in Isa. i. 11. Still, the error, since error there appears to be, does not lie in a failure to observe the outward ordinances.

9-11. The fatal deficiency lies in the failure to understand the meaning of sacrifice. With penetrating irony the prophet brings home to the formalist, who prides himself on the exactness of his ritual performances, the absurdity of supposing that the Creator of heaven and earth cares to receive a few goats or sheep, or that He is anxious about a few cattle more or less, or would miss a meal if an Israelite failed to render in detail some offering prescribed by law or custom.

'The cattle upon the mountains of a thousand' may mean the mountains 'where thousands of cattle live' (R. V. marg.), but the text probably gives the idea correctly. The Hebrew construction, however, is awkward, and Cheyne, following Olshausen, adopts

And the wild beasts of the field are mine.
If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: 12
For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.
Will I eat the flesh of bulls, 13
Or drink the blood of goats?
Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving; 14
And pay thy vows unto the Most High:
And call upon me in the day of trouble; 15
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.
But unto the wicked God saith, 16

---

the reading 'mountains of God.' This is smoother and less significant. The latter part of verse 11 runs literally, 'Whatever moveth in the field is with me,' before my eye, in my possession, subjects of my thought, objects of my care.

12, 13. The idea that the god literally partook of the meat offered in sacrifice upon his altar prevailed in early Semitic religions, as in the lower type of religions it prevails still. Israel may have been in danger of interpreting too literally the current language concerning sacrifice, compare Lev. xxi. 8, 17, &c., 'the bread of thy God.' This does not follow, however, from the indignant irony of these verses. It is enough that the prophet should thus indicate the absurdity of the notion that these multiplied sacrifices were necessary to God, as if in any sense He fed upon them or would lack sustenance without them.

14, 15. What God desires is a grateful heart and an obedient life. A man who offers this pure and spiritual sacrifice may pray with the assurance that he will be heard and helped.

Did the Psalmist intend to disparage material sacrifice altogether? This is not implied. Cheyne, in his note on this verse, says that neither prophets nor wise men regarded animal sacrifices 'as ideally good. The spiritual meaning of the sacrificial system cannot have been recognized by them.' But this must not be considered as proved. The controversy thus raised, e. g. over Jer. vii. 22, is too large to be entered on in a note, but the Psalmist at least does not set aside as useless or evil the practice of offering animal sacrifice, while undoubtedly, like Isaiah, Hosea and Micah, he emphasizes the importance of spiritual worship.

16. The second part of the indictment on which we now enter shows the reason of the first. There was great danger of what was worse than formalism, downright hypocrisy. To substitute outward ritual for inward allegiance is bad enough, but a man

What hast thou to do to declare my statutes,
And that thou hast taken my covenant in thy mouth?
17 Seeing thou hatest instruction,
And castest my words behind thee.
18 When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst with him,
And hast been partaker with adulterers.
19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil,
And thy tongue frameth deceit.
20 Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother;
Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.
21 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence;
Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself:
But I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.

---

seldom stops with this. When he has backslidden in heart, it will not be long before he backslides in life. Israel had largely done so. Whilst rehearsing God's statutes and repeating the words of the covenant which bound the people to obedience, many of them were violating some of the most fundamental precepts of morality. This deserves and receives stern denunciation.

17. A man has no right to take the solemn words of precept as his professed guide, if all the time he practically gets rid of them and hates the correction or moral discipline which is intended to train him to obedience.

18–20. Theft, adultery, falsehood, even where close kinship might have been supposed to restrain the lying tongue—these are no slight faults. In the former two cases, it is not the commission of crime that is directly charged, but pleasure in the company of the dishonest and impure implies a partaking in their sins. Treachery and meanness are marks of social degeneracy and disintegration. No community can long hold together where malice and falsehood are eating out the heart of friendship and family affection; but for an Israelite, with the solemn covenant of his nation upon his lips, thus to prove himself traitor and blasphemer!

21. One further evil had been committed. Because God did not at once punish these offences, the very fount of religious life had become tainted. The evildoer should have understood and profited by God's forbearance, but instead he dared to blaspheme

Now consider this, ye that forget God, 22
Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver:
Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth 23
me;
And to him that ordereth his conversation *aright*
Will I shew the salvation of God.

God, to regard Him as like himself, to degrade his very religion, and imagine that such a sinner could still be a *chasid*, a saint, a man with his name in the covenant-grant, while false to its fundamental character. This frightful tendency has prevailed in other generations, Eccles. viii. 11.

God is not mocked. At least by His servant He will expose the evil, lay bare the mischief, and set these gross offences **in order**, i. e. carefully specified and drawn up as in a formal indictment, before the eyes of the offender. If after this he deceives himself, the greater will be his condemnation.

22. Reformation is urged. And this on two grounds: the first, the danger of severe and final punishment; the second, the blessedness of offering acceptable service. Sinners on the one hand are warned that God will not always forbear, that men must not presume upon His 'slackness.'

23. On the other hand, in a fine conclusion, the Psalmist declares the true principles of religion in all ages. In worship what is needed is a thankful heart, and for the obtaining of salvation a faithful and devoted life. From Samuel to James (1 Sam. xv. 22; Jas. i. 27), as well as before the time of the O. T. prophet and the N. T. apostle, God's messengers have taught that the ritual with which He is well pleased is the service of the heart.

'Its faith and hope Thy canticles,
And its obedience praise!'

The fact that in the second line of this verse the word 'aright' has to be supplied has led to variations of rendering, and it has been proposed to alter the text to 'him that is perfect in his way.' But the simple translation of simple words is enough, **And to him that ordereth** (*or* 'prepareth), his way, without specifying how. It was the 'way,' i. e. the conduct, the actual steps taken in life, that was wrong, and no one who listened to the searching words of this faithful servant of God but knew how to prepare his way in future.

51 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David: when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness:

Psalm LI. A Penitent's Prayer.

This Psalm is sacred in the long annals of human sorrow for sin and desire for pardon and cleansing. The tradition of more than two thousand years has indissolubly associated it with the name of David, his 'bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire,' his dark transgression and whole-souled repentance. How should it be read to-day, and what light does external or internal evidence shed upon the meaning and history of one of the deepest utterances of O. T. religion?

The Psalm before us forms the first in a small 'Davidic' collection, embodied by the Elohistic editor in what is now described as Book II. This group extends to the end of Ps. lxx, only lxvi and lxvii being without the title 'of David.' Eight out of the number are assigned in the titles to some special period in David's history. Now it must be seen at once that it is quite impossible to accept these titles literally; to suppose, e. g., that such verses as li. 18, 19 and liii. 6 were written in David's time, or that other passages, quite unsuited to his position, either as fugitive or as king, came from David's pen. It remains possible, however, that this group contains a nucleus of early compositions, modified in the course of centuries and expressly prepared for public worship in a later age. An alternative view assumes that a later poet sought to describe appropriately, as he thought, some of the circumstances of David's life, to aid the faith and piety of a later generation. But a large number of modern critics simply regard the titles as erroneous, attached in error to post-Exilic compositions by editors who misunderstood the traditional phrase 'of David' to imply Davidic authorship. The probability of these several hypotheses will be discussed in detail in the Introduction and notes to each Psalm.

In the present case, can the title be defended? If verses 18 and 19 formed a part of the original Psalm, certainly not, for none of the attempts to explain away the obvious meaning of 'Build thou the walls of Jerusalem' is satisfactory. It is, however, probable on many grounds that these verses constitute a liturgical addition to a distinctly personal and spiritual Psalm which might appear to disparage the sacrificial system.

Is the main portion of the Psalm appropriate in David's lips? The often raised objection that verse 4 ignores the gravity of his offence on the human side has been often refuted. A sinner in

According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

the presence of the Most Holy God views himself and his sin for the moment in that searching light alone. As Paul could not be accounted chief of sinners in human estimation, so the words 'against thee only have I sinned' do not necessarily imply that nothing in the offences acknowledged affected the penitent's fellow men. Of what kind of transgression is such language strictly and utterly true?

Still, it must be questioned whether the general tone of penitence is that of David's day. We are not prepared to say with Cheyne, 'David could not have had these ideas,' but it is certainly true to say that both the thoughts and the language of the Psalm harmonize better with the period of the second Isaiah. The phrase 'thy holy spirit' in verse 11 in our opinion points unquestionably to a comparatively late epoch.

Modern critics who adopt a late date for the Psalm strongly advocate a national rather than a personal application of the words. The best statement of this position is that of Robertson Smith, who contends that this is 'a Psalm of the true Israel of the Exile in the mouth of a prophet, perhaps of the very prophet who wrote the last chapters of the Book of Isaiah[1].' He argues that 'blood-guiltiness' in verse 14 does not mean murder but mortal sin, and pleads that the words throughout fitly represent the spiritual experience of Israel. The whole question of the 'I' of the Psalms is discussed in the Introduction to vol. ii, but here it may be said that surely verses 5 and 6 must be personal, and that the deepest significance of the whole utterance is lost if the personal element is excluded. That the individual Jew often spoke representatively, and often thought of the community to which he belonged even in his confessions of sin, is of course not only possible but an unquestionable and instructive fact.

On the whole question of authorship it must be said that it cannot be *proved* that David wrote any part of this Psalm, and that probabilities are against the supposition, but that still it may be read as in past ages with David's sin and penitence in mind as a palmary illustration of a great heart greatly sinning and greatly repenting. It has for long been reckoned in the Christian Church as the fourth of the Penitential Psalms.

It may be divided into four parts: verses 1–4, a general confession; 5–12, more minute acknowledgement and earnest prayer for pardon; 13–17, an anticipation of the blessings of renewal, with 18 and 19 as a conclusion added later.

1. The Psalmist is confessing his sins, not his crimes. Hence

[1] *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, second Edition, Note E, p. 440.

2 Wash me throughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I acknowledge my transgressions:
And my sin is ever before me.
4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
And done that which is evil in thy sight:
That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest,
And be clear when thou judgest.

---

he casts himself on the Divine grace as the only power which can set him right. He prays 'Be gracious unto me,' and rests his plea upon (1) the bond of covenant **loving-kindness** between God and His people, and (2) the 'abundant compassions' which belong to the Divine character. See Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

2. In the former verse the plural, in this verse the singular number is employed to describe sin. Acts of departure from the law of God may be manifold, the root-evil is one. It is here described by two words, of which **iniquity** denotes rather the human aspect of evil as perverseness, distortion, while **sin** indicates a failure, as in God's sight, to reach the true end of man.

Of the three words used for pardon, viz. **blot out, wash,** and **cleanse,** the first is used of the wiping away of debt, the second of the washing of clothes from deeply ingrained filth by kneading, and the third of declaring clean from leprosy. It would probably be a mistake to press the etymological meaning in the many cases where these words are metaphorically used. The significance of the combination lies in this, that the Psalmist employs a variety of words both for sin and for forgiveness, to show the depth of his penitence and his earnest desire for pardon.

3. The literal rendering 'For I know' expresses the meaning better than **I acknowledge.** The Psalmist does not ask for forgiveness on the ground that he is now confessing his sin, but explains his plea for mercy by saying how conscious he is of the heinousness of his offence and that he cannot banish the thought of it from his mind.

4. Now the confession begins. The emphasis still lies upon the Psalmist's relation to God; it is the evil of his action 'in the sight of Jehovah' (2 Sam. xi. 27 and xii. 9) which now chiefly impresses him. He makes this confession in order that it may be made perfectly clear that God is justified in pronouncing sentence of condemnation. The grace for which the Psalmist asks can only be granted on these terms. Paul's quotation in Rom. iii. 4 follows the LXX in phraseology, but is perfectly true to the meaning of the original.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; 5
And in sin did my mother conceive me.
Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: 6
And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: 7
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me to hear joy and gladness; 8
That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.
Hide thy face from my sins, 9
And blot out all mine iniquities.

5, 6. The confession becomes still more complete and thorough. Not only are the actions in themselves wrong and the sinful inclinations which led to them, but the evil goes deeper into the nature, which is represented as having been infected even from birth. This is not alleged in palliation of the offence, but rather as showing greater need for forgiveness and cleansing. Nothing but inward holiness will suffice for a holy God. **Truth** and **wisdom** are characteristic words in the O. T., used especially in the later period as synonyms for righteousness. Knowledge of the right, and sincere desire and effort to perform it, may be described by any of these three words. It is better to read the last line as a prayer, 'Therefore make me to know wisdom in the inner chamber of my heart.'

7. hyssop: mentioned in Exod. xii. 22 in connexion with the passover, and in Num. xix. 6 and Heb. ix. 19 in reference to the cleansing of the leper, was apparently a kind of wild marjoram with an aromatic flavour, possessing 'straight, slender, leafy stalks with small heads,' growing so that a bunch could readily be broken off and used for sprinkling. Ceremonial purification, therefore, is associated with the word **purge**, while **wash** has reference to the removal of actual defilement of the clothing or the person.

whiter than snow: see Isa. i. 18; it is impossible to say whether Psalmist or prophet—if either—is the borrower here and elsewhere in the Psalm, where parallel expressions are found.

8. 'Breaking of the bones' is used metaphorically in Pss. xxxii. 3 and xlii. 10 of a deep dejection and grief which as it were shatters the whole frame. In this case it is produced by a guilty conscience, i. e. under the hand of God.

9. The usual phrase for forgiveness implies that sin should be 'covered' in God's sight; here He is represented as averting His

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a right spirit within me.
11 Cast me not away from thy presence;
And take not thy holy spirit from me.
12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation:
And uphold me with a free spirit.
13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways;
And sinners shall be converted unto thee.

face that He may not see it. Both expressions are, of course, anthropomorphic.

10. This and the two following verses contain six prayers, all marked by a spiritual and evangelical, or, as it may be called, a New Testament character. This tone, only paralleled in the Old Testament in the second Isaiah, and to a less degree in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, is one of the strongest arguments against Davidic authorship.

Render, 'Create for me' (R. V. marg.), and instead of 'right,' 'a steadfast spirit.' An entirely new heart is intended, not restoration to a former condition. The Psalmist recognizes that only a clean heart thus created afresh by Divine power can be constant under the assaults of temptation.

11. A heart thus cleansed must be kept clean by the sense of God's presence. Defilement and inconstancy alienate from God; a man who walks in the light of His countenance is preserved from sin. The **holy spirit** of God is mentioned only here and in Isa. lxiii. 10, 11. The phrase prepares the way for N. T. teaching, but it indicates here not a Divine Person, an interior distinction in the Deity, but a Divine influence resting upon man.

12. The prayers of this verse describe the results which will follow from answers to those which precede. These are **joy**, such as those who live in the Divine presence experience, because they have ever a Defender and Saviour (Ps. v. 11), and 'a willing spirit,' one whose inward impulses are so renewed that spontaneously and eagerly it moves in the right way. The word is used of freewill offerings, Exod. xxxv. 5, and of 'nobles' or 'princes' in Ps. xlvii. 9; Prov. xxv. 7. The LXX follows the latter meaning. An illuminative parallel is Isa. xxxii. 5, where the connexion between nobility and liberality is brought out. Compare Keble's 'princely heart of innocence.'

13. The first manifestation of a changed heart is readiness to testify and persuade other transgressors to turn to the right way. The language is intelligible in the mouth of David, though it is much more appropriate as coming from one of the later prophets.

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my 14
salvation;
And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.
O Lord, open thou my lips; 15
And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.
For thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: 16
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: 17
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not
despise.

Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: 18

---

14. On the other hand, the phrase **bloodguiltiness,** *lit.* 'blood' (plural), is most naturally understood of one who had the sin of murder, directly or indirectly, upon his head. 'A man of bloods,' Ps. v. 7, is a murderer. It is doubtless used of the nation in such passages as Isa. i. 15; Ezek. vii. 23, and it *might* mean here the consequences of mortal sin, but it would apply most appropriately to a conscience burdened with such a crime as David's murderous exposure of Uriah in battle.

thy righteousness. Forgiveness is not viewed as an infraction of the law of righteousness, but an illustration of it: since God has promised to forgive the penitent.

15. The lips had been closed from praise and all acts of worship by alienation of heart and aberration of life. The penitent contemplates with joy the prospect of being restored to the congregation of God's true Israel.

16. Render, 'That I should give it' (R. V. marg.). The language used here concerning sacrifice corresponds with that of Pss. xl. 6 and l. 8. Only a comparative disregard of outward sacrifices is intended; the penitent is conscious that the blood of bulls and of goats will not cleanse his sins or serve for thank-offering.

17. Thanksgiving is the acceptable sacrifice of Ps. l. 14, 23; the mention of contrition here shows that the Psalmist is thinking rather of initial approach to God than of acknowledgement and service after forgiveness.

18, 19. If these verses form, as seems most likely, a liturgical addition, it would seem that they are partly intended to correct the impression left by 16 and 17, still shared by many, that God required only spiritual sacrifices. The priest tones down the

Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.
19 Then shalt thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness,
in burnt offering and whole burnt offering:
Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

52 For the Chief Musician. Maschil of David: when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

1 Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?

---

strong language of the prophet. The view of Ewald and others, dating indeed from Theodoret, which makes the whole Psalm an utterance of the period of the Exile, interprets 16 and 17 of the impossibility of offering sacrifices in captivity, while 18 and 19 contain a vow to renew these when Jerusalem is restored from her desolation.

Build thou the walls of Jerusalem must be understood in the light of Ps. cxlvii. 2; even Delitzsch acknowledges that only by a strain can the phrase be put into David's mouth and made to refer to the wall which Solomon built, 1 Kings iii. 1.

Outward offerings may be **sacrifices of righteousness**, if presented in a right spirit. No prophetic teaching, from 1 Sam. xv. 22 onwards, was ever intended to contravene that statement. The use of two words, *'olah* = burnt-offering and *kalil* = whole burnt-offering, is poetical, to emphasize the thought; the former word lays stress on the burning, the ascending in smoke, the latter on the entire consumption of the victim. Forms of religion are still necessary, even for the most spiritual worshippers, and it is natural that if this deeply personal and highly spiritual Psalm was to be used in the temple-worship, such a recognition as these closing verses contain should be made of the significance and value of the temple sacrifices.

Psalm LII. The Oppressor's Overthrow.

The evildoer so vigorously denounced in this Psalm is rich, influential, cruel and a liar. If David were its author, it would not be unnatural to think of Doeg as the 'man of mischief,' although the description does not fit in detail. Doeg was hardly a mighty man, though he was 'chief herdman,' and see 1 Sam. xxi. 7. marg.; he did not tell lies, though he did give information concerning David's movements; he could not be said to 'trust in riches'; and the Psalm contains no allusion to his slaughter of the priests (1 Sam. xxii. 18). Hengstenberg, in maintaining the Davidic authorship, thinks that Saul is the person addressed in the

The mercy of God *endureth* continually.
Thy tongue deviseth very wickedness; 2
Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
Thou lovest evil more than good; 3
And lying rather than to speak righteousness. [Selah
Thou lovest all devouring words, 4

Psalm. It is much more probable that the Psalm belongs to the period of the later Monarchy, when national wealth had increased and there was a tendency to concentrate it in few hands, when the poorer classes were oppressed, as described by Amos and Micah, and all kinds of unscrupulous methods were employed to crush and to plunder in the name of justice. See Amos v. 11, viii. 6; Micah ii. 2, vii. 3. This passionate cry of a humble saint is much more suitably placed amidst such conditions than in the lips of David denouncing Doeg. There is no need to bring it, as do Cheyne and others, down so late as the Persian period; nor can it be said to be 'animated by a strong Church-sentiment.' The use of the term 'saints,' as in the last verse, is not confined to the Maccabaean and pre-Maccabaean periods.

The first half of the Psalm, 1–5, contains a denunciation of a prominent oppressor; the latter, 6–9, draws in favourable contrast a picture of the security of the righteous. For the word **Maschil** see Introd. p. 16.

1. The abrupt opening is most effective. To 'glory in evil-doing' implies a conscience hardened against all considerations of right, and an arrogant triumph in the success of injustice. **O mighty man,** perhaps better, 'Thou tyrant!' (P.B.V.). The word does not usually carry with it an evil sense, but mere might soon becomes self-confident and unjust. Such boasting is short-sighted; the lovingkindness of God' (the Strong One) is mightier, and it 'endureth all the day,' not for a passing hour.

2, 3. very wickedness: *lit.* 'destructions,' i. e. the utter ruin of the man oppressed. The clause **working deceitfully** applies not to the tongue, nor the razor, but to the man himself, 'O thou framer of deceit!' The frequent mention of lying and slander in these Psalms of the oppressed shows that the forms of justice were in a measure preserved. Unblushing violence was no doubt often committed, but the practice of fraud gave an additional bitterness to the cruelty complained of. To be robbed is hard, to be slandered is often harder to bear; the Psalmist suffered both. Compare the denunciation of unjust judges in Ps. lxxxii.

4, 5. The concentration of wrath upon the lying tongue shows that the mischief had been wrought by it rather than by brute

O thou deceitful tongue.
5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever,
He shall take thee up, and pluck thee out of thy tent,
And root thee out of the land of the living. [Selah
6 The righteous also shall see *it*, and fear,
And shall laugh at him, *saying*,
7 Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength;
But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
And strengthened himself in his wickedness.
8 But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God:

---

force, though doubtless the wealth and standing of the oppressor caused his word to be readily believed.

The tyrant is identified with the tongue, but the figures of verse 5 apply to the former, not to the latter. The metaphors are twofold. One is indicated by the word **destroy,** *lit.* 'break down' or smash utterly, used of cities or houses, Deut. vii. 5; 2 Kings x. 27. The other three words —'lay hold,' 'pluck up,' 'root out' —belong together. The ground of boasting is that this evil man is so securely entrenched in his position that he may do any kind of mischief with impunity; the Psalmist foretells that a mightier than he will seize him, as a man seizes coal with the tongs, or a weed in the earth, pluck him out of his place and cast him away **for ever.** So Jeremiah contrasts the desolate condition of the man who 'maketh flesh his arm' with the security and fruitfulness of the righteous, Jer. xvii. 5-8. So also another Psalmist anticipates the retribution that awaits the deceitful tongue, cxx. 3, 4.

6. The **fear** is caused by the suddenness and completeness of the overthrow; it implies the awe occasioned by the manifestation of Divine might. **Shall laugh,** not in the petty, malicious spirit of one who gloats over a neighbour's discomfiture, but with the joy of a man who after long discouragement sees clear proof that righteousness is stronger than unrighteousness, and that there is a God who will vindicate the cause of truth. Such confidence it is always hard to maintain under grinding oppression, and with no clear hope of a future life the righteous poor amongst the Jews must often have been tempted to despair.

7. This verse shows the ground of the triumph and the lesson to be learned from it. Compare the teaching of Ps. xlix and the phraseology of verse 6.

8. Perowne places a comma after **tree,** making the clause **in**

I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.
I will give thee thanks for ever, because thou hast done it : 9
And I will wait on thy name, for it is good, in the presence
of thy saints.

For the Chief Musician ; set to Mahalath. Maschil of David. **53**

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. 1
Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity ;

---

the house of God to describe the position and security of the speaker. In any case the olive tree cannot be in the house ; it is not a case of growing 'in the courts of the house,' as in Ps. xcii. 13. The Psalmist means two things: he is flourishing whilst his rich oppressor is desolate ; he is at home, happy and safe, whilst the other, whose position seemed impregnable, is an exile and wanderer. The 'lovingkindness of God' is the best safeguard **for ever and ever.**

9. Hence, thanksgiving for the past and trust for the future. **In the presence of thy saints** might seem to imply some such verb as 'I will declare' thy name ; Hupfeld and others would correct the text, and Cheyne even calls the word **wait** 'senseless.' It is unusual, and a slight change would give 'I will celebrate.' The text as it stands can only mean, 'I will attend in thy house and wait for further manifestations of thy goodness.' For the word **saints,** or 'beloved ones,' see Ps. l. 9 and detached note on *chasidim* in Appendix, p. 360.

Psalm LIII. A Later Version of Psalm XIV.

For an exposition of the substance of the Psalm, see Ps. xiv. Here it need only be noted that the name Elohim is found instead of Yahweh, as elsewhere in this Book, and that the minor variations of the text raise an interesting question. Are the texts of both Psalms as we have them derived from a common original? Or does this Psalm represent a deliberately modified recension of xiv, adapted to the circumstances of a later time? The question can hardly be settled with our present data, but the latter seems to be the more probable supposition. The similarity between the letters in Ps. xiv. 5, 6 and verse 5 of this Psalm has been thought to point to conjectural emendation on the part of the editor who included the Psalm in Book II, but the whole facts are best accounted for on the hypothesis of a second recension intended for the new circumstances of a later period. The modifications are slight, but noteworthy.

1. This version as compared with xiv. 1 adds **and,** and reads

There is none that doeth good.
2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there were any that did understand,
That did seek after God.
3 Every one of them is gone back; they are together become filthy;
There is none that doeth good, no, not one.
4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
And call not upon God.
5 There were they in great fear, where no fear was:
For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee;
Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath rejected them.
6 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!
When God bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Then shall Jacob rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

---

iniquity for 'works.' Both changes mark a later hand: the earlier form is the simpler and stronger.

3. gone back instead of 'gone aside'; a slight and unimportant change of word.

4. 'All' is omitted before **workers of iniquity**, as in xiv. 4.

5. Here considerable changes occur. The clause **where no fear was** is added, and two strong phrases are found instead of the tamer text of xiv. 5, 6: **God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee**; and **God hath rejected them.** These alterations, which still preserve much of the sound of the original, might easily be accounted for if it was desired to adapt the Psalm for use on the occasion of some great deliverance, like the overthrow of Sennacherib's army. But if Ps. xiv belongs to the time of Manasseh, it would not be easy to find such an event, e. g. in the time of Jeremiah.

6. This last verse occurs in both recensions, and is not improbably a liturgical addition appended later still. For though the phraseology does not necessarily imply the Babylonish captivity, it is best understood as a post-Exilic utterance.

If the theory be adopted of one common text for the two

For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. Maschil of **54**
David: when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Doth not
David hide himself with us?

Save me, O God, by thy name, 1
And judge me in thy might.
Hear my prayer, O God; 2
Give ear to the words of my mouth.
For strangers are risen up against me, 3
And violent men have sought after my soul:

---

recensions—as advocated, for example, by Dr. E. G. King in his commentary—then the Psalm may well have been composed in the period Hezekiah–Manasseh, the two recensions exhibiting more or less corrupt editions of it current in the interval, both being embodied after the Exile in different collections of Psalms, with the liturgical petition added, praying for a restoration of the fortunes of Israel.

Psalm LIV. Deliverance from Peril.

The writer of this Psalm is in danger from godless foes. These may, or may not, have been foreigners, verse 3. Otherwise there is hardly anything in the Psalm to fix its date. The title assigns it to the incident in David's persecution by Saul, when the Ziphites informed the king that David was hiding in their 'wilderness,' a region a few miles distant from Hebron 'covered with scrub and honeycombed by caves,' G. A. Smith. See 1 Sam. xxiii. 19, xxvi. 1. The language of the Psalm contains nothing specially appropriate to that occasion, neither is there anything distinctly unsuitable, unless it be the phraseology of verse 3.

The first three verses of the Psalm describe a perilous situation, and the latter four anticipate complete deliverance. For the term **Maschil** see p. 16.

1. The **name** of God stands for His whole manifested character. The Psalmist confidently rests his plea on the Divine nature and Divine strength as revealed in history, and he claims that his righteous cause should be vindicated and the dangers which threatened him averted.

2. Accordingly he prays as to One who seems to have forgotten him, but who will not refuse to hear the cry of His servant.

3. The word translated **strangers** most frequently means those who are strange to a country, i. e. foreigners, who may be presumed to be hostile. So in Hos. vii. 9, viii. 7; Isa. i. 7, xxv. 2, 5, &c. But it may mean strange to a person, or to a family: see

They have not set God before them. [Selah
4 Behold, God is mine helper:
The Lord is of them that uphold my soul.
5 He shall requite the evil unto mine enemies:
Destroy thou them in thy truth.
6 With a freewill offering will I sacrifice unto thee:
I will give thanks unto thy name, O LORD, for it is good.
7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble;
And mine eye hath seen *my desire* upon mine enemies.

---

article 'Stranger' in Hastings's *Bible Dict.* i. 623. **Violent men** (or 'fierce,' or 'terrible') are described as synonymous with wicked Israelites in Jer. xv. 21; and those who **have not set God before them** may be either inside or outside the pale of the covenant-nation. The whole description does not at all suggest such foes as the Ziphites, and it is difficult to fit the language of these verses to the situation described in the title.

The parallel passage in Ps. lxxxvi. 14 reads 'proud' instead of 'strangers,' the Hebrew words being very much alike.

4. The Lord is of (A.V. 'with') **them that uphold my soul.** The preposition used here, known as *Beth essentiae*, ascribes to God the character described by the clause following; He 'falls under the category of such and fills it by Himself alone' (Delitzsch), i.e. He is the upholder or sustainer of my soul. Cheyne translates 'the great upholder,' and compares Judges xi. 35, where he represents Jephthah as saying to his daughter, 'Thou art my greatest troubler,' but the form of speech hardly implies so much as this.

5. thy truth: i. e. the Divine fidelity to His own character, His revealed promises and the actual facts of the case, demands that these wicked men should be cut off.

6. The **freewill offering** (see Num. xv. 3) was recognized in connexion with the ordained round of sacrificial ritual. But some interpreters translate, 'With a free will I will offer sacrifice,' i. e. statutes shall become songs and duty will be all delight. Note that the name Yahweh is retained here in this Elohistic Psalm; either by a slip, or because this name was more usual in such a connexion, or most probably by way of emphasis. When the Psalmist is dwelling upon the excellence of the Divine name he clings to that covenant-title which meant so much for him and for all Israel.

7. The perfect tense **hath delivered, hath seen,** is anticipatory; it describes what will have happened when—as the Psalmist hopes,

For the Chief Musician ; on stringed instruments. Maschil of David. **55**

Give ear to my prayer, O God ; 1
And hide not thyself from my supplication.
Attend unto me, and answer me : 2

---

soon—he offers his sacrifice of thanksgiving for deliverance triumphantly accomplished.

PSALM LV. PRAYER OF ONE BASELY BETRAYED.

If this Psalm be understood to be David's, it must inevitably be referred to the rebellion of Absalom and the treachery of Ahithophel, and thus verses 12–14 have been understood for centuries, from the time of the Targum onwards. But closer examination shows that a superficial resemblance to the circumstances of David covers an altogether different situation. The writer of this Psalm is not a king, not even a king under a cloud ; he is in the city when he writes, and unable to escape ; he lives in a condition of society unlike that of Jerusalem in David's time. He suffered from base treachery like David, but the king would not have styled Ahithophel his 'equal,' and neither the previous intercourse (verse 14) nor the mode of betrayal (verses 20, 21) corresponds with the conditions under which the former 'privy councillor' tried to mislead his sovereign. Hitzig interprets the Psalm of Jeremiah and Pashhur ; while Olshausen brings the date down to the Syrian period, and refers to the story of Alcimus in 1 Macc. vii. 9–25. One can only say that these conjectures are even less probable than the traditional ascription to David.

Relinquishing the attempt to fix the exact occasion of the Psalm, we find in it a very graphic picture of a servant of God immured in a city full of anarchy and discord, assailed by cruel enemies, deserted by all his friends and especially by one who was bound to him by the most sacred ties, but had shamelessly betrayed him and sided with his foes. He longs for peace, and can find none around him, nor any outward way of escape. He turns, however, to that spiritual refuge which every good man can find in the sanctuary of his own soul and casts his burden upon Jehovah, sure of finding help in God's own time and way.

Verses 1–8 contain the Psalmist's complaint and a description of his sore need ; in 9–15 he breaks out in strong denunciation of the wicked who are the cause of his trouble ; while in 16–23 he takes refuge in God and in prayer, gaining confidence as he proceeds and ending with assured faith and hope.

1–3. An earnest appeal for a hearing from one whose plea is his great need. Two words describe the Psalmist's condition :

I am restless in my complaint, and moan;
3 Because of the voice of the enemy,
Because of the oppression of the wicked;
For they cast iniquity upon me,
And in anger they persecute me.
4 My heart is sore pained within me:
And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me,
And horror hath overwhelmed me.
6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove!
Then would I fly away, and be at rest.
7 Lo, then would I wander far off,
I would lodge in the wilderness. [Selah
8 I would haste me to a shelter
From the stormy wind and tempest.

---

(1) **I am restless,** and therefore either (2) 'I must moan'—must relieve myself by pouring out broken cries; or, 'I am deeply stirred' and agitated. The ground of this trouble is the oppression of **the enemy.** These (1) slander and threaten him with **the voice;** (2) **cast iniquity** upon him, either in the sense of heaping curses, or, more probably, piling up one wicked device after another against him; and (3) make their anger felt in direct 'persecution.'

4, 5. His life is more than threatened; he is passing through the very valley of the shadow of death. Pain and fear are succeeded by **horror**—a rare word, see its use in Ezek. vii. 18. This deeper shadow **hath overwhelmed** the sufferer, or 'wraps him round' like an icy pall. Compare the description culminating in 'horror' in Isa. xxi. 3, 4.

6-8. He would fain escape, but clearly cannot, since he longs for a bird's wings to carry him far from the strifes of men. The **dove** mentioned here is the wild rock-dove—the original stock from which tamer varieties of turtle-dove and pigeon are derived—which builds in the steep cliffs overlooking the wadys, always far from the abodes of men. Compare 'the covert of the steep place' as the home of the dove in Cant. ii. 14. It is capable of both swift and long flights. The 'lodge in the wilderness' would furnish him with the two things he most desires—solitude and security. The 'storm' from which he seeks to escape is, of course, the turmoil of angry and violent men, verses 9-11.

Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongue: 9
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: 10
Iniquity also and mischief are in the midst of it.
Wickedness is in the midst thereof: 11
Oppression and guile depart not from her streets.
For it was not an enemy that reproached me; 12
Then I could have borne it:
Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me;
Then I would have hid myself from him:
But it was thou, a man mine equal, 13
My companion, and my familiar friend.

9-11. The thought of these prompts him to sudden wrath. But the vehement prayer which bursts from the Psalmist's lips is not that the men themselves should be destroyed, but rather that their machinations may be overthrown. 'Bring them to nought, O Lord, and confuse their tongues,' perhaps with an allusion to Babel (Gen. xi. 5). Their devices are characterized by (1) **violence** and **strife,** verse 9; (2) **iniquity** and **mischief,** verse 10; (3) **wickedness,** fraud, and **guile,** verse 11. When such dire and ominous shapes stalk about the city, what can the good citizen desire but that they should be speedily and entirely banished? When such a tower is being built to defy high heaven, what better can happen than that the tongues of the builders should be confounded and their pretentious structure brought to nought?

12. The rapid transition from the singular to the plural, or the plural to the singular, in the Psalmist's denunciation of his enemies meets us often. It may be sometimes a form of speech only, the many being represented as one, or the one viewed as leading many others in his train. Sometimes, however—as in this case—the language is so strong and personal that it is quite clear the Psalmist has an individual foe in mind whose aggravated treachery makes him forget all others in comparison.

The tenses here should be rendered as presents: 'For it is not an enemy that revileth me; that I could bear: neither is it one who hateth, &c. . . . But—thou!'

13, 14. This false friend was an **equal** in rank and position, *lit.* one according to my price or valuation; and what was more, a **companion** or associate; further still, an intimate **friend**; and,

14 We took sweet counsel together,
We walked in the house of God with the throng.
15 Let death come suddenly upon them,
Let them go down alive into the pit:
For wickedness is in their dwelling, in the midst of them.
16 As for me, I will call upon God;
And the LORD shall save me.
17 Evening, and morning, and at noonday, will I complain, and moan:
And he shall hear my voice.
18 He hath redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me:

---

closest and most tender bond of all, one who had worshipped with the Psalmist and shared his confidence in spiritual experiences, admitted to the inmost and most sacred chambers of his heart. That such a man should not only betray a personal friend, but join the company of the wicked and taunt and slander the loyal follower of Jehovah, seemed assuredly the most cruel outrage of all, and this awakens the Psalmist's fierce and just indignation.

15. The plural recurs: 'thou' becomes **them.** The imprecation is levelled against all the caitiff crew of whom this man is but one egregious specimen. All are false to God and truth, and the Old Testament saint ruthlessly prays that, like Korah and his companions, they may be swallowed up alive, be suddenly destroyed and that without remedy. Such sudden and complete destruction is desired, not in a spirit of cruelty, but as an assured mark of Divine visitation.

16. Another abrupt transition; the storm which sprang up suddenly in verse 9 subsides as suddenly. The Psalmist withdraws into the sanctuary, the pavilion in which God hides His own servants from the strife of tongues. The name Yahweh is used, as well as the characteristic Elohim which prevails in Book II. See liv. 6.

17. Evening, and morning, for the Jewish day begins with sunset; 'at noon,' as representing all that lies between morning and evening. The Psalmist will reiterate his prayer, for his enemies repeat their attacks; he will pray continually, for his peril is incessant.

18. The last clause of the last verse, 'Then he heareth my voice,' and the tense in this, 'He hath delivered,' both represent

For they were many *that strove* with me.
God shall hear, and answer them, 19
Even he that abideth of old, [Selah
The men who have no changes,
And who fear not God.
He hath put forth his hands against such as were at peace 20
with him:
He hath profaned his covenant.

---

that as accomplished which the Psalmist only anticipates in the assurance of faith. 'He shall assuredly set free my soul that they come not nigh me, for they are many that strive against me' would give the idea better to an English reader.

19. In the former part of this verse, 'afflict' (marg.) is better than R. V. text, **answer.** The latter must mean, requite them according to that which God knows to be their character. The second line should run, 'Even he that sitteth King from of old.'

The latter part of the verse is difficult. The **Selah** seems misplaced, and many critics would alter the text; Cheyne considers this and the following verses to form a fragment of another Psalm.

Taking the text as it stands, and following the improved punctuation of R. V., what are we to understand by **changes?** Either (1) the moral change of reformation—but the word does not properly mean this, and the singular would surely have been used; or (2) vicissitudes, changes of fortune, for lack of which these men are at ease and godless—but the word is not elsewhere found in this sense; or (3) relief, as a watchman or patrol is relieved at intervals from mounting guard—these men go on uninterruptedly in their wickedness. Of these alternative meanings the last is the best, but it must be allowed that no one is free from objection, and the text is probably corrupt.

A slight change would enable us to render, 'Men who have no faithfulness,' who do not know the meaning of good faith—which fits the context exactly. Of various emendations suggested, this is the easiest and most satisfactory.

20. The transition here is somewhat awkward, and it has been proposed to place this verse after 14 (Hupfeld). If smoothness of construction be the determining consideration, doubtless the connexion of thought is thus made much easier. But there is significance and force in the very wanderings and alternations of the Psalmist's thoughts, as he passes without warning from the thought of his own nest in the rock to a prayer for his enemies'

21 His mouth was smooth as butter,
But his heart was war:
His words were softer than oil,
Yet were they drawn swords.
22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee:
He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction:
Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days;
But I will trust in thee.

---

destruction (verse 9), or from the fierce indignation which would devour them alive to his own quiet waiting for Jehovah (verse 16). And as in verse 15 he passes from the single traitor to the many foes, so here he turns from the godlessness of the many back to the base treachery of the one chief offender.

covenant: i. e. with man, but such desecration of friendship may well be spoken of in religious terms as an offence against all natural piety.

21. The translation of R. V. is much more vigorous than A. V., and truer to the original. The Hebrew says **his heart was war,** as in Ps. cix. 4 we read 'I am prayer.'

22. Another rapid transition, introducing the last stanza. The words **Cast thy burden** may be understood as spoken to the Psalmist, or of the Psalmist as addressing himself; if he, as in some other cases (xxxiv. 3, 4, 11, &c.), is giving advice to others, the change of note is very marked.

burden well conveys the general meaning here, though it is hardly an accurate translation. The LXX renders 'care'; but 'lot' or 'condition' gives the sense of the word better. A similar meaning is reached by understanding it not as a noun but as part of a verb, see R. V. marg., 'that which he hath given thee.' Compare the distinction between the two words for 'burden' in Gal. vi. 2, 5. This is the latter kind of burden, which every man must carry for himself, and it is not said that God will relieve the bearer of his load, but that He will sustain him under its weight.

23. After so gracious a promise, precious to N. T. believers as well as to O. T. saints, comes an anticipation of vengeance from which the disciples of Christ shrink. The Psalmist's words, however, fairly correspond to the Christian anticipation of righteous

For the Chief Musician ; set to Jonath elem rehokim. *A Psalm* **56**
of David : Michtam : when the Philistines took him in Gath.

Be merciful unto me, O God ; for man would swallow me 1
up :

---

retribution at the day of judgement. The life of 'men of blood' shall be cut short, he says, as a token that God is against them and will visit them with a kind of punishment which will make manifest the fact. See Prov. x. 27.

The closing words only exhibit the other side of the same shield. Just as he who trusts in Jehovah is safe, so he who defies Jehovah must be made to suffer, and be seen and known to suffer, and that not by 'the common death of all men,' or 'the visitation of all men,' Num. x. 29. So Jeremiah says 'he that getteth riches, and not by right; in the midst of his days they shall leave him, and at his end he shall be a fool,' xvii. 11. 'But as for me, I take refuge in thee.'

Psalm LVI. Faith Victorious over Fear.

This and the following Psalm form companion pictures. In style, in structure, and in theme they are similar, and have been esteemed by good judges as amongst the most beautiful in the Psalter. They both belong to a 'Davidic' collection, and this one is assigned in the title to the period of Saul's persecution when David took refuge with the Philistines in Gath, esteeming himself safer with the hereditary foes of Israel than with the king who ought to have been his friend and protector. The phrase of the title, 'When the Philistines took him in Gath,' appears to be inconsistent with the statement of the history that David 'fled' and went unto 'the king of Gath.' There is no necessary discrepancy, as it is clear that when David's identity was discovered he was obliged to feign madness, and he must have been more or less of a prisoner. Still, as in Ps. xxxiv, which is referred to the same period, the substitution of 'Abimelech' for Achish awakens some suspicion, so the phraseology of this title suggests a comparatively late date and a lack of complete acquaintance with the history. Modern critics refer the Psalm to the period of Jeremiah or later. The fact that the Targum contains a preface describing the Psalm as one 'concerning the congregation of Israel' shows that in very early times different views of the Psalms prevailed, and the same words are applied, now to David in Gath, now to the nation oppressed by its enemies. Thus variously have these sacred lyrics been understood and used in all ages, and whilst the probabilities are decidedly against the Davidic authorship of this Psalm, there is nothing in its contents inconsistent with his experiences as, time

All the day long he fighting oppresseth me.
2 Mine enemies would swallow me up all the day long:
For they be many that fight proudly against me.
3 What time I am afraid,
I will put my trust in thee.

---

and again, either amongst Philistines in Gath or sheltering from Saul in the recesses of a cave, his faith triumphed over his natural and inevitable fears.

The words **Jonath elem rehokim** are explained in R. V. marg. The change in vocalization necessary for the translation 'The dove of the distant terebinths' is very slight, and it may be understood that this is the name of the melody to which the Psalm was sung by the choir. Both LXX and Targum give a kind of mystical interpretation of the words. The LXX renders, 'For the people far removed from the sanctuary,' and the Targum compares the nation to 'a silent dove, when they were far from their cities and turned again and praised the Lord of the world.' For the term **Michtam**, which has been translated 'an inscription,' 'an epigrammatic writing,' and 'a golden Psalm,' see Introd. p. 16, compare also Ps. xvi.

The structure of the Psalm is simple and effective. There are three stanzas, 1–4, 5–11, and 12, 13; the two former ending with a refrain, 'In God I will praise his word, I will not fear,' &c. The progress of feeling in which faith gradually wins its victory is delicately and aptly brought to a climax in words which express complete devotion to God's service.

1. Render, 'Be gracious unto me.' The contrast is drawn between God in His might and 'frail man,' for the word used carries this connotation. These human foes are formidable enough to the Psalmist. They 'gape,' like the jaws of a wild beast ready to swallow its prey, they 'contend,' they do their best to 'crush' him to the earth, such is the literal meaning of the three words found in this verse. But in the sight of God they are but feeble men.

2. Twice is the phrase repeated, **all the day long:** and this verse adds the fact that the foes are many in number and haughty in demeanour. The word rendered in A. V. 'O thou most High,' refers to the enemies, as in R. V. **proudly,** *lit.* 'from on high.' The expression shows how superior the Psalmist's adversaries were to him in position and advantages; but the balance is far more than redressed by the single phrase 'God is for me' (verse 9).

3. Kirkpatrick notes that 'David's sojourn in Gath is the only occasion on which he is recorded to have been afraid of man.' See 1 Sam. xxi. 12, though in Ps. xviii. 4 we read 'the floods of

In God I will praise his word:
In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid;
What can flesh do unto me?
All the day long they wrest my words:
All their thoughts are against me for evil.
They gather themselves together, they hide themselves,
They mark my steps,
Even as they have waited for my soul.

ungodliness made me afraid.' In this verse fear is not positively asserted, the force of the tense is that of the subjunctive mood in Latin, 'In the day, or at the time, when fear (may) assail me.' On the other hand, it is not excluded, as if the Psalmist had said 'In case I should,' or 'If it should happen that I were afraid.'

Fear and faith may co-exist, but one must conquer. Victory rests with the devout will, strengthened by earnest prayer.

4. In this verse the victory begins to be realized; prayer has preceded (verse 1), praise follows. Faith has begun to do its work, 'In God have I taken refuge,' and fear has so far been overcome that the Psalmist can say **I will not be afraid.** But he is still reasoning down the natural tremors of his lower self. A. V. represents him as having no hesitation, but the form of the question should be preserved as in R. V., **What can** (mere mortal) **flesh do unto me?**

The twice-repeated clause, **In God,** shows that whether faith is being exercised or thanksgiving offered, the strength of grace is the upholding energy. Such a phrase as this anticipates the New Testament usage of 'in Christ.'

5. Second strophe. The word 'strophe' here exactly represents the movement, for the Psalmist returns upon his own steps to his first position and travels once more along a new curve to the exultant phrase of the refrain.

5, 6. A fresh description of the perils which for the third time are described as lasting all the day long, so that the Psalmist never feels himself safe. This time fraud is more in evidence than violence. Slander is employed, plots abound, his foes are active. They scheme, they gather, they hide, they watch—all with a view to their victim's life. The successive clauses give a graphic picture of the dangers which beset a man who, like David at the court of Achish, or Jeremiah during part of his life, lived in an atmosphere of suspicion. If understood of a nation, the words must be understood metaphorically and are not so suitable, though there have been periods when the Jew as such has been similarly suspected and beset.

7 Shall they escape by iniquity?
In anger cast down the peoples, O God.
8 Thou tellest my wanderings:
Put thou my tears into thy bottle;
Are they not in thy book?
9 Then shall mine enemies turn back in the day that I call:
This I know, that God is for me.

---

7. According to the present text R. V. has given the best translation, **by iniquity,** meaning 'in their iniquity, gross as it is.' Is it to be thought that iniquity, just because it is high-handed, shall bring them off scathless? A very slight change in a letter would give the meaning 'Requite them according to their iniquity,' a much easier reading, grammatically and every way.

Note R. V. **peoples:** one of many cases in which A. V. 'people' is altogether misleading. The Psalmist anticipates the judgement of the God of the whole earth on the nations outside Israel, and this fact is not favourable to the theory of Davidic authorship.

8. my wanderings. A pathetic touch, whether the reader thinks of David, or of Jeremiah, or of exiles in Babylon, or of the vagrant traveller in the journey of life. Alternative renderings suggested, 'inward agitation' or 'my moaning,' are both unsuitable. God counts every step and turn in the road taken by the hunted wanderer; every tear he sheds is treasured like the water in the skin-bottle, sometimes so precious that the traveller reckons up the few drops that remain; every sigh and sorrow is recorded in the book which notes all and never errs.

The Psalmist knows these things, and yet he prays that God will mark and take count of his griefs. The proposed rendering, 'My tears are put,' is tame in comparison with the text, which passes from confidence to petition and back to confidence again. The Divine **book** is spoken of chiefly as a record of those who are dear to God and cared for by Him: compare Exod. xxxii. 32, 'blot me out of thy book'; Mal. iii. 16, 17, 'a book of remembrance for them that feared Jehovah,' &c.

9. More positive assurance is expressed than has as yet been reached, faith passes into knowledge. The verse opens with an emphatic word **Then,** as if the finger pointed to the very time and place of the overthrow in question. Further, the Psalmist is able to say **This I know:** and lastly, he asserts definitely **God is for me.** R. V. marg. 'for' is perhaps to be preferred to the text, **that,** though both renderings lead to the same point in the end.

In God will I praise *his* word: 10
In the LORD will I praise *his* word.
In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid; 11
What can man do unto me?
Thy vows are upon me, O God: 12
I will render thank offerings unto thee.
For thou hast delivered my soul from death: 13
Hast thou not *delivered* my feet from falling?
That I may walk before God
In the light of the living.

10, 11. The refrain is here repeated with two slight changes. One is that the first line, **In God will I praise his word,** is reiterated, with the name Yahweh substituted for Elohim. Some critics attribute this change to the revision of a Yahwistic text by an Elohist editor. If it be an unintentional corruption the emphasis thus introduced is appropriate and impressive. The other variation is the substitution of **man** for 'flesh,' of course without change of meaning.

12, 13. The last stanza brings the Psalm to a close in the practical fashion characteristic of a truly devout spirit. It is written from the standpoint of deliverance already accomplished. **Thy vows** means vows made to God, obligations incurred by the Psalmist, who is ready to fulfil in his prosperity promises made in the time of his need.

Two kinds of acknowledgement are mentioned: **thank offerings,** according to R. V., which means sacrifices over and above such as the law demands—or perhaps 'thanksgivings,' and loyal obedience to God's commands in the days that are to come.

The second line of verse 13, Hast thou **not** delivered **my feet from falling?** is a question only in appearance. In reality it contains a strong affirmation; thus Delitzsch renders, 'Yea, and my feet from falling.' R. V. indicates this, while it retains the more literal translation, by placing the note of interrogation after 'falling.'

The object of the greater and the lesser deliverance which God has accomplished for the Psalmist, viz. the preservation of his life and the sustaining of the active powers of life, is that he may henceforth employ all his faculties in God's service and walk in the light of His countenance, 'till travelling days are done.'

57 For the Chief Musician; *set to* Al-tashheth. *A Psalm* of David: Michtam: when he fled from Saul, in the cave.

1 Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me;
For my soul taketh refuge in thee:
Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge,
Until *these* calamities be overpast.

PSALM LVII. CONFIDENCE IN DANGER.

This Psalm should be carefully compared with the preceding. Not only are the tone and spirit of the two identical, but the occurrence of a refrain at the end of each of the two chief divisions of the Psalm is common to both, as are certain phrases repeated in both. In this instance, however, the danger is less and the confidence greater. The closing verses of Ps. lvii strike a much higher note of triumph than is reached in any part of Ps. lvi.

The inscription refers the Psalm to David, 'when he fled from Saul, in the cave.' It is not clear whether this means, as the LXX understands it, 'into the cave.' If so, the reference is probably to the cave of Adullam, a few miles from Hebron, see 1 Sam. xxii. 1. The more appropriate reference, however, would be to the well-known incident when David spared Saul's life in the cave at En-gedi, on the west of the Dead Sea, 1 Sam. xxiv. 3; but the very general language of the Psalm contains nothing decisive as to occasion or authorship. The latter verses of the Psalm are found again in Book V, as part of Ps. cviii, but as that Psalm is composite and its text inferior, we shall be safe in concluding that they are found here in their original setting.

For the meaning of **Michtam** and **Al-tashheth,** 'Destroy not,' see Introd. p. 16. The usually received conjecture is that these are the opening words of a vintage-song (see Isa. lxv. 8), to the melody of which the Psalm was to be sung.

1. Be merciful: rather, 'Be gracious.'

taketh refuge: better, 'hath taken refuge,' marking the ground of the Psalmist's claim. 'Sanctuary' will not be refused to this fugitive from persecution. Further, he who has found in God a safe hiding-place in the past resolves that he will still take shelter in the same secure refuge, described as **the shadow of thy wings.** The same figure is found some eight or ten times elsewhere in the Psalms.

Instead of **calamities** R. V. marg. gives 'wickednesses,' but the word, which means literally 'destructions,' conveys rather the idea of 'destructive storm.' Driver renders 'engulfing ruin'; P. B. V. gives the picturesque paraphrase 'until this tyranny be overpast.'

I will cry unto God Most High; 2
Unto God that performeth *all things* for me.
He shall send from heaven, and save me, 3
When he that would swallow me up reproacheth; [Selah
God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.
My soul is among lions; 4
I lie among them that are set on fire,
Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.

---

2. Three names of God are combined here: *Elohim*, the general name of Deity, characteristic of this book; *'Elyon*, Most High, the Ruler of all; and *El*, the strong God, who is described as 'He who achieveth for me'—no object to the verb being expressed. All that ought to be done, all that need be done, all that can rightly be done, God 'performs' for His servant.

3. When **he that would swallow me up reproacheth:** only two words in the Hebrew, represented by eight in English. The terseness of the expression occasions some difficulty. A.V. marg., following LXX and Jerome, makes God the subject: 'He, i.e. God, reproacheth him who would crush me,' so also Cheyne who translates 'giveth them to dishonour'—but God is not said thus to 'reproach' men. In R.V. the word 'reproacheth' has no object: either God or God's servant is to be understood. A better translation would be, 'For he who pants for my life hath blasphemed,' i.e. has blasphemously defied God, denying His ability or willingness to help, and thus rendered the clause gives briefly and parenthetically the ground of the Psalmist's assurance that God will interpose on his behalf.

The first clause of the verse, **He shall send from heaven,** is completed in the last line, and the object of the verb 'send' is supplied. Two radiant angels, Lovingkindness and Truth, are to be dispatched on a mission of deliverance, one to which God's mercy and faithfulness are equally pledged. Compare the mention of 'light and truth' in Ps. xliii. 3.

If the **Selah** in this verse implies an interval, it occurs awkwardly. In LXX it is found at the end of verse 2.

4. A difficulty arises as to the meaning of **I lie.** The part of the verb used forbids us to understand it in the sense of the simple indicative present, hence R.V. marg. gives 'I must lie.' This is not, however, the proper meaning of the 'cohortative' in Hebrew, nor does it well fit the context. Cheyne suggests the emendation, 'My soul hath dwelt,' but taking the text as it stands, we should

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;
Let thy glory *be* above all the earth.

6 They have prepared a net for my steps;
My soul is bowed down:
They have digged a pit before me;
They are fallen into the midst thereof themselves. [Selah
7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed:
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises.
8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp:
I myself will awake right early.

---

agree with Delitzsch, Kirkpatrick and others who find in the clause an expression of confidence. Hence the meaning would be 'I will lie,' 'I will take my rest even among fire-breathing foes,' secure in the presence of Him who sends His angels to guard me (Ps. xxxiv. 7).

5. A noble refrain, appearing here somewhat abruptly, unless the connexion with verse 3 be closely preserved, verse 4 being understood in the sense just explained. In this ascription of praise may also perhaps be included the prayer that God would assert His majesty and 'take to Himself His great glory' in the overthrow of the above-named savage enemies.

6. Again, after the refrain, as in Ps. lvi, the Psalmist recurs to the actual situation. The perfects in the first three lines refer to past events, but in the last line **They are fallen** expresses the anticipation of faith. The Psalmist is not yet delivered, according to verses 1 and 4.

In the second line the LXX probably gives the correct meaning, 'They have bowed down my soul,' and if so this line also is anticipatory—they have spread their nets, and already see me captive and humiliated in their hands. Then the surprise of the fourth line is the more effective; instead of finding the victim in the pitfall, they lie disgraced and helpless in the midst of it themselves.

7. *Lit.* 'Firm is my heart, O God.' In li. 10 the Psalmist had prayed for a firm, a steadfast spirit; here that blessing is enjoyed. The word does not mean, as in the Vulgate and some other versions, 'ready'; preparedness results from steadfastness. Staunch in defence, courageous in attack, the heart that is **fixed** is ready for any event.

8. right early. This is not a morning hymn, however suitable

I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the peoples : 9
I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.
For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, 10
And thy truth unto the skies.
Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens ; 11
Let thy glory *be* above all the earth.

For the Chief Musician ; *set to* Al-tashheth. *A Psalm* of David : **58**
Michtam.

Do ye indeed in silence speak righteousness ? 1

---

for Lauds or Matins. The Psalmist simply rallies his powers for praise and active service.

my glory : i. e. my soul, myself. In the second line render, with R. V. marg., 'I will awake the dawn,' will anticipate in my thanksgiving the coming of the morn of deliverance.

For **psaltery and harp,** *nebhel* and *kinnor*, see on Ps. xxxiii. 2.

9. Again, as in lvi. 7, we find an allusion to the nations outside Israel, such as does not actually disprove Davidic authorship but is distinctly unfavourable to it.

10. Almost identical with xxxvi. 10, but particularly appropriate here after the mention of lovingkindness and truth in verse 3.

11. This refrain forms the keynote of the Psalm and of the Psalter. Whether David, or Jeremiah, or Israel, or a humbler soul be the suppliant for personal succour, every Psalmist longs for this consummation of the glory of God, and finds no spot of earth too lowly but that from it he may soar to the skies. Exalt thyself, O God, in heaven and in earth and above both : *Gloria in excelsis !*

Psalm LVIII. Rebuke of Unjust Judges.

It is clear that this Psalm is intended to denounce those who were unrighteously exercising authority and perverting justice. But the terms are not sufficiently explicit for us to be sure whether an Israelite is protesting against foreign domination, or remonstrating with judges and persons of influence in his own nation who were abusing their lawful position and offending against the covenant of Jehovah. That the Psalm cannot be referred to David appears quite certain. Baethgen and others are equally sure that it is post-Exilic, and that the indignation of the Psalmist has been aroused by the violence and injustice of Babylonians or Persians, or even oppressors of a later period. It seems to us, for reasons which will be more fully given in the notes, that the period to which the Psalm may be best referred is that of the

Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?
2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness;
Ye weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.
3 The wicked are estranged from the womb:
They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

---

later Monarchy. Clearer signs would be given than are here afforded that heathen oppressors are intended, were the protest against these. Psalm lxxxii, which is very similar in subject, should be carefully compared with this.

The style of the Psalm is original and forcible, here and there to the point of obscurity. It opens with a burst of indignation, verses 1 and 2; the evils complained of are specified, 3–5; and the urgent prayer or confident prophecy of verses 6–9 prepares for the anticipation of Divine judgement, 10, 11. For **Al-tashheth** and **Michtam** see p. 16.

1. in silence. The word thus translated is only found once elsewhere in O. T., viz. in the title of Ps. lvi, in a phrase itself very doubtful. A. V. translates it by the word 'congregation,' a meaning now generally acknowledged to be inadmissible. Other versions give little help, LXX, Jer. and Vulg. rendering it 'indeed,' while the Syriac omits it altogether. R. V. marg. understands the word as meaning that righteousness is 'dumb' in the mouths of these unworthy dispensers of justice. Another note in the margin gives an alternative reading, obtained by a very slight change in the vowel-points, and most modern critics accept this emendation. The verse then would run, 'Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O ye gods, *or*, O ye mighty ones? Do ye in uprightness judge the sons of men?' The term 'gods' or 'mighty ones' does not refer to angels but to the judges who in Ps. lxxxii. 1, 6 are certainly described as Elohim, with a reference to Exod. xxi. 6, xxii. 8, 9, 28. The irony implied in the use of this lofty term for judges who ought to consider their office as Divinely given, and to exercise jurisdiction as representatives of the All-Righteous, is bitter and telling.

2. We might expect this verse to begin with 'Nay'; but the thought latent in the Hebrew particle is, 'So far from doing this, you go on to work wickedness, first in plan, then in action.'

weigh out: a technical phrase for the use of the scales of justice, compare Prov. xvi. 11. Perhaps, with Baethgen and others, we should read, 'Your hands weigh out violence in the land'—that which is solemnly dispensed in your courts is the precise opposite of what it ought to be. See Isa. vii. 7.

3. The perverseness in question is traced to its roots. The

Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: 4
They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear;
Which hearkeneth not to the voice of charmers, 5
Charming never so wisely.
Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: 6
Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.
Let them melt away as water that runneth apace: 7
When he aimeth his arrows, let them be as though they were cut off.

---

evil act springs from an evil heart, one that in the very bent of its nature is estranged from God, His covenant, and His laws.

4, 5. The first of a number of striking comparisons by means of which the Psalmist graphically portrays various aspects of the evil-doing of these wicked men.

They are like the serpent in two respects: (1) the venom which they subtly instil into the veins of the body politic; (2) the peculiar callousness and obstinacy which is characteristic of one particular kind of serpent only. Most snakes yield to the arts of the charmer who has learned to control these intractable creatures by music and cries of his own. It is not clear what kind of serpent is intended here by **adder**. Probably the Egyptian cobra is intended, the 'aspic' by which Cleopatra took her own life, akin to the well-known hooded species, *Cobra di capello*. Snakes thus inaccessible to the charmer's art are mentioned in Jer. viii. 17.

6. The next comparison brings out the violence and brutality of men who will stick at nothing to secure their ends. The words, **great teeth**, or 'jaw teeth,' and **young lions**, emphasize the force and ferocity of the oppressors, whose utmost power can, however, be easily broken by Omnipotence. A slight change in the vowel-points would give the meaning 'God shall break' instead of 'Break thou'; this would be more in harmony with the context and the spirit of the Psalm, which is not imprecatory, but prophetic.

7. Two more comparisons: (1) the winter torrent, which rises with terrible rapidity and does great mischief for a short time, and then disappears, leaving the bed of the stream almost dry; (2) arrows, which are indeed carefully aimed and fitted on the string, but which fall pointless and ineffective, as if an unseen hand had broken and cut them off. The second line is obscure in phraseology, but the general meaning is clear. It is better to

8 *Let them be* as a snail which melteth and passeth
away:
Like the untimely birth of a woman, that hath not seen
the sun.
9 Before your pots can feel the thorns,
He shall take them away with a whirlwind, the green and
the burning alike.

---

make the wicked man subject of 'aimeth,' not God, as in some interpretations.

These clauses are best read as futures—'They shall be as water,' &c.; 'If he aim his arrows, they shall be,' &c.

8. Two more metaphors, both intended to indicate the gradual and imperceptible but complete disappearance of evil men and their deeds. The snail which leaves behind it a slimy track and seems to waste away as it passes, or which shrivels up in its shell under the fierce heat of the Eastern sun, furnishes a striking picture such as Dante loves, the whole picture condensed into three words. The offspring of a premature birth, which 'cometh in vanity and departeth in darkness' (Eccles. vi. 4), describes the utter futility of the course of evil-doers. However powerful these 'sons of the mighty' may appear, they are nothing and will come to nothing. The Psalmist sees and foretells this rather than prays for it.

9. Another comparison, as vivid and bold and as unhackneyed as the last two, but obviously describing a sudden and violent overthrow of the wicked, not their silent and gradual disappearance. A whirlwind is represented as descending suddenly upon the fire of thorns which travellers have lighted in the desert for cooking purposes, and sweeping away as in a moment all the blazing sticks and embers, leaving the place bare and their whole purpose frustrated.

There is a difference of opinion, however, as to the rendering of the last words. R. V. refers them to the fuel, **the green and the burning** (sticks) **alike.** Others would refer to the contents of the vessel and render, 'the raw meat and the cooked alike'; or combine the two lines of interpretation by translating, 'both the raw meat and the hot embers.' There is, however, much to be said for the rendering accepted both by Cheyne (following Bickell) and Kirkpatrick, 'While the flesh is still raw, wrath shall sweep them away like a whirlwind.' This is substantially accepted in R. V. marg. and preserves the meaning of the word translated 'burning' in its proper reference to the fire of the Divine anger.

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: 10
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
So that men shall say, Verily there is a reward for the 11
righteous:
Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

For the Chief Musician; *set to* Al-tashheth. *A Psalm* of 59
David: Michtam: when Saul sent, and they watched the house
to kill him.

Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: 1

10. This verse is not out of harmony with the 'prophetic' view of the Psalm taken in these notes, but rather confirms the interpretation that the verbs in the preceding verses are to be understood as futures. Whether such joy as is here described is justifiable or not, depends upon its nature and the grounds on which it is based. The justification is found in the next verse. The figure of washing the feet in the blood of the vanquished, natural to the age and familiar to the contemporaries of the Psalmist, must in any case be revolting to modern taste and feeling.

11. The moral element in such rejoicing is here declared. To exult on personal grounds over the defeat of an enemy, however natural, is not commended in the Old Testament. But that faithful servants of God, to whom no revelation of a future life had been made, should exult in the thought that the righteous actually are recompensed in the earth, and in manifest proofs that a righteous God does exist and will act, is not only defensible, but inevitable. Such anticipation and exultation then formed a necessary element in a righteous character. No true Israelite could contemplate with a moment's toleration the alternative 'there is no God that judgeth in the earth,' and the writer of this spirited and powerful Psalm has illustrated the principle that 'The song that nerves a nation's heart is in itself a deed.'

Psalm LIX. Prayer in time of Danger.

Another Psalm belonging to the group assigned to David, attributed in the title to the period of Saul's persecution, when assassins surrounded his house and he escaped through Michal's stratagem; see 1 Sam. xix. 11–17. It presents points of similarity with Ps. lviii. and others of this 'Davidic' group, but the closest parallel is with Ps. lv. As in the case of that Psalm, it seems quite impossible to suppose that David described his enemies in the terms of verses 6 and 14; verse 11 would be out of place in his

Set me on high from them that rise up against me.
2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,
And save me from the bloodthirsty men.
3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul;
The mighty gather themselves together against me:
Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD.
4 They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault:
Awake thou to help me, and behold.

---

lips, whilst verses 8 and 13 exhibit that wider outlook upon the nations around in comparison with Israel which would be, not indeed, impossible—but unnatural in David's lips under the circumstances named.

But of positive guidance to the circumstances under which it was written, we have little or none. Hezekiah, Josiah, Nehemiah have been named as possible authors, and Theodore of Mopsuestia is at one with some of the latest critics in ascribing the Psalm to the Maccabæan period. The phraseology of verse 11 seems to point to one in authority, and if Ewald be not literally right in naming as author one of the later kings before the Babylonish captivity, he has indicated the period to which the Psalm probably belongs.

It is divided into four stanzas: verses 1–5 form an opening prayer for deliverance, verses 6–9 contain a fuller description of the foe and his insolent defiance, in verses 10–13 the prayer is renewed, while verses 14–17 anticipate deliverance as near.

1, 2. Set me on high describes a form of deliverance for which the Psalmists often prayed. In times of anarchy the 'high fortress' is the only safe place for the non-combatant; see verse 9 and Prov. xviii. 10. Two words describe the enmity to the Psalmist entertained by his foes, two others describe their character as wicked and bloodthirsty.

3. The first verb is perfect, the second, inceptive: the meaning being, 'they have lain in wait,' and now see, 'they begin to gather openly against me.' The assertion of innocence suits Hezekiah or Josiah better than later kings of Judah, though the transgression and fault here referred to may mean only that the attack had been unprovoked by any offence against the assailants.

4. The tenses still point to a process going on, to which attention is called: an idea borne out by the apostrophe praying that God would arouse Himself to see, as if He were blind and apathetic.

Even thou, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, 5
Arise to visit all the heathen:
Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. [Selah
They return at evening, they make a noise like a dog, 6
And go round about the city.
Behold, they belch out with their mouth; 7
Swords are in their lips:
For who, *say they*, doth hear?
But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; 8
Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.

---

5. The pith of the whole prayer is that God would 'visit the nations,' described as 'treacherous evil-doers,' and the fact that the stress of the plea lies upon these words puts the supposition of the title as to the composition of the Psalm practically out of the question. Note the titles of God used, 'Jehovah, God of Sabaoth, God of Israel': (1) the personal, covenant-keeping, God of revelation, (2) the Ruler of all forces in earth or sky, (3) one who occupies a specially gracious relation to His chosen people, which He is asked here to maintain and manifest by the overthrow of their enemies. Many interpreters think that the accumulation of several names found in some Elohistic Psalms points to the blending of different recensions; compare Ps. l. 1. Each title has its own significance and there is nothing redundant here, but the grammatical form of Elohim is anomalous.

6. The comparison is intelligible only to those familiar with Oriental cities and the troops of scavenger dogs which gather at night-time in search of the refuse scattered in the streets by day, howling like hyenas, which indeed they resemble; compare Ps. xxii. 16. Render the second clause 'They snarl like dogs.' The phrase 'round the city' may be part of the drapery of the metaphor, and need not imply that the Psalmist was actually besieged in a city; but the figure would be much more appropriate if he was actually hemmed in by savage foes.

7. The phraseology of this verse might be illustrated by the foul language of Rabshakeh in 2 Kings xviii. The scornful defiance of Jehovah manifested by the Psalmists' enemies, backed up by brute force, formed their severest trial; compare xlii. 10, &c.

8. Again an emphatic, 'Nay, but Thou, Jehovah,' as in verse 5. The Psalmist gives a parallel reply to that which Isaiah and Hezekiah gave to the servants of Sennacherib, 2 Kings xix. 21, &c. Zion laughs her enemies to scorn, because God has them in derision, Ps. ii. 4.

9 O my strength, I will wait upon thee:
For God is my high tower.
10 The God of my mercy shall prevent me:
God shall let me see *my desire* upon mine enemies.
11 Slay them not, lest my people forget:
Scatter them by thy power, and bring them down,
O Lord our shield.
12 *For* the sin of their mouth, *and* the words of their lips,
Let them even be taken in their pride,
And for cursing and lying which they speak.
13 Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they be no more:

---

9. R. V. is no doubt right in reading, with the chief versions, **my strength,** instead of 'His strength' as in A. V. and the Massoretic text. It is difficult to make sense of the latter. See Revisers' marginal note and compare the form of the refrain in verse 17.

10. Render 'My God shall come to meet me with His loving-kindness,' according to one reading in the Hebrew, followed by LXX. The archaism **prevent** is, after all explanations given, liable to be misunderstood. 'God shall let me look upon them that lie in wait for me' is nearer to the Hebrew than R. V. text, and though no doubt 'see my desire' is substantially meant, the original phrase is not quite so strong as this.

11. Slay them not, lest my people forget: a terrible prayer, but to be taken in conjunction with 'Consume them' in verse 13. The Psalmist does not pray, however, that his enemies may suffer a cruel, lingering punishment, that he may gloat over their pain; but that the visitation may be such as will form a visible monument and manifestation of God's righteous judgement, whereas a swift and complete destruction, striking awe for the moment, might soon be forgotten.

'Make them wander to and fro' (R.V. marg.) shows the kind of punishment intended: the case of Cain may perhaps be referred to, Gen. iv. 13, 14.

12. The words 'for' and 'and' are inserted in A. V. and R. V. to make the meaning clearer. But the literal translation is more forcible, **The sin of their mouth, the word of their lips!** 'Oh let them be taken then in their pride,' &c. The first line may mean that every word of their lips is a sin, and is so taken by Cheyne, Perowne, Driver, and others.

13. The phraseology of this verse shows that it must not be

And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob,
Unto the ends of the earth. [Selah
And at evening let them return, let them make a noise like 14
a dog,
And go round about the city.
They shall wander up and down for meat, 15
And tarry all night if they be not satisfied.
But I will sing of thy strength; 16

---

understood too literally. The Psalmist prays for judgement, the manner he leaves to God, though himself desiring now this, now that form of visitation. He is chiefly anxious that the great moral ends of Divine government should be answered. In the second half of the verse render 'And let men know,' the third plural being used impersonally. The fact that the God of Jacob rules is to be known to the very ends of the earth. Such language fits well the time of Hezekiah and was actually used by that king, according to the narrative of 2 Kings xix. 19.

14. The last section of the Psalm contains a repetition of verse 6—with a difference. This difference does not amount to so much as is indicated by the translation of A. V. and R. V., **let them return**, &c., as if the Psalmist desired in somewhat truculent spirit that the fierceness of his enemies should bring its own curse upon their heads. Render, with most modern interpreters, 'And at evening they do indeed return, they snarl like dogs,' &c., a contrast being intended between their disappointed rage and the Psalmist's quiet confidence in verses 16 and 17.

15. This seems made clear by the emphatic **They** with which this verse opens, best expressed by 'As for them, they wander,' &c. These words are not found in the description of verse 6. There the Psalmist passes on to speak of his enemies' fury and defiance, here of their disappointment and defeat. The dogs have not been able to seize their prey, and they are represented as spending the night in fruitless search.

The word rendered **tarry all night** (R. V. and A. V. marg.) is understood by A. V. text, following LXX, as derived from another root; 'grudge' (A. V.) is an archaism for 'murmur.' It is found freely in Wiclif, Tyndale, and earlier English versions, for open complaint, whilst in A. V. we find the signs of transition to the modern sense of inward discontent and ill-will. See Dr. Hastings' article in his *Bible Dictionary*.

16, 17. Render 'But I—I will sing': the Psalmist emphasizes by way of contrast his own security and happiness. He

Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning:
For thou hast been my high tower,
And a refuge in the day of my distress.
17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing praises:
For God is my high tower, the God of my mercy.

60 For the Chief Musician; set to Shushan Eduth: Michtam of David, to teach: when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the Valley of Salt twelve thousand.

1 O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast broken us down;

---

enlarges upon the similar expressions used in verse 9, adding the clause **in the morning**—so frequent in the Psalms, see especially Ps. xxx. 5—partly to point the contrast with his own night of weeping, partly as a striking antithesis to the description of his enemies prowling in vain through the night outside his stronghold.

The repetition of the words 'refuge,' 'strength,' 'high tower' to describe God's care of His servant, now that his enemies have vanished from the scene, shows clearly the change of mood from that described in the opening verses. Prayer has brought succour and faith triumphs in the assurance of things not seen.

Psalm LX. After a Lost Battle.

It is clear that this Psalm was written under the shadow of a great disaster. If it was originally composed in its present form, it would seem to refer to a serious defeat sustained at the hands of Edom, which the Psalmist hopes will, with Divine aid, be changed into a victory. The title refers it to a critical period in the history of David's conquests, recorded in 2 Sam. viii. 13, 14. According to the received text of that passage there is no mention of Edom in verse 13, but a slight change would harmonize the verse with 1 Chron. xviii. 12, so that we should read, David 'returned from smiting the Syrians and smote of Edom in the Valley of Salt eighteen thousand men.' The tradition mentioned in the title of the Psalm speaks of a victory gained by Joab and the slaughter of twelve thousand men. If harmony is to be established between Psalm and history, we must suppose that while David was engaged in conquering the Syrians, the Edomites took the opportunity of raiding from the South and gained a substantial victory which for the time caused a panic; but that David, like an able general, was not taken off his guard, but 'gat him a name' for the masterly way in which he defeated both enemies,

Thou hast been angry; O restore us again.

vanquishing 'Aram' himself and dispatching Joab at the critical moment to overthrow Edom. The Valley of Salt extended from the foot of the Dead Sea to the cliffs (Akrabbim), which here form the margin of the Ghor and divide Judah from Edom.

This explanation is possible, though somewhat forced, since the history gives no hint of any defeat, while verses 2 and 3 would seem to describe a kingdom shaken to its foundations. Those who reject the title are divided in their views; no suitable occasion before the exile has been suggested, and the majority bring down the Psalm to Maccabæan times, when the nation again possessed armies (verse 10). Against this is certainly to be set the fact that verses 5–12 are repeated in Ps. cviii, a composite Psalm found in Book V. The compiler apparently used for liturgical purposes a portion of this Psalm as found in an earlier collection, and the interval implied would necessitate a much earlier date than the Maccabæan times for the Psalm before us.

It is quite possible, however, that this Psalm also is composite and that the latter portion embodies an earlier 'Davidic' fragment which, with its characteristic references to Edom and Philistia, was utilized in the time of Jehoiakim (see 2 Kings xxiv. 10) or by an Exilic or post-Exilic Psalmist, who desired to encourage his compatriots under circumstances which might almost drive them to despair. This is substantially Ewald's explanation, though he divides the Psalm somewhat differently, and some such theory as this best accounts for the facts. Verses 1–4 would then describe the desolation of Jerusalem during its later history: verse 5 strikes a transition note, and in verses 6–8 is a quotation from an early oracle. Then verses 9–12 may be viewed either as the application of the oracle which a 'Davidic' poet had made and which the later Psalmist uses, or the later writer uses the term 'Edom' as symbolical of the enemies which were formidable in his own time.

In the title, the words **Shushan Eduth,** 'Lily of the Testimony,' stand for the melody to which the Psalm was to be sung. Compare Shoshanim Eduth in the title of Ps. lxxx. For the phrase **to teach,** which means that the Psalm was intended for committal to memory and recitation, compare 2 Sam. i. 18.

1. Parallel expressions are found in Ps. xliv. 9 ff., lxxiv. 1, universally considered to be of comparatively late date. **Cast us off** is used in the sense of 'forsaken our cause,' and **hast broken us down** = hast crushed our power; as in 2 Sam. v. 20, a rush of water breaks through a dam, or as when a fatal breach is made in a wall; see Ps. lxxx. 12. **Restore us again** does not necessarily imply captivity, though it recalls the ideas and phrases of Ps. lxxx.

2 Thou hast made the land to tremble; thou hast rent it:
Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.
3 Thou hast shewed thy people hard things:
Thou hast made us to drink the wine of staggering.
4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee,
That it may be displayed because of the truth. [Selah

5 That thy beloved may be delivered,
Save with thy right hand, and answer us.

---

2. The figures are those of an earthquake, which causes at first a trembling of the solid ground, then fissures and chasms appear, then houses topple and fall and are shattered in ruins. Such phraseology *might* be used of the effects of an Edomite raid in David's time, but could be only hyperbolically true.

3. hard things: i. e. harsh, severe, see Exod. i. 14. The **wine of staggering** means 'the cup of God's wrath,' the effects of which upon the sufferers are like those of 'a drink of deadly wine' (P.B.V.), making the brain to reel, the limbs to totter, and causing the whole man to be prostrate and stupefied with pain and fear. Compare Isa. li. 17–23.

4. A difficulty in the interpretation of the second line arises from the use of a word which by some is understood to mean 'bow,' by others **truth,** the usage in either case being somewhat anomalous. Whichever translation be given, moreover, the connexion of this verse with the context presents some awkward features.

The LXX and other ancient versions, R.V. marg., and most modern commentators, translate (Only) 'that they may flee from before the bow.' The words in this case are spoken in bitterness, as if God were reproached for making Israel His people, and giving them a banner with His name inscribed upon it, only to put them to flight before the enemy. The alternative rendering, adopted in R. V. text, by some ancient versions, Delitzsch, and other moderns, **That it may be displayed because of the truth,** can with difficulty be obtained from the Hebrew, and does not fit well with the preceding verse. It is contended that this rendering makes a better preparation for the prayer of verse 5, but the line of cleavage in the thought of the Psalm is most naturally found at the end of verse 4.

5. According to the theory of interpretation suggested in the introduction this verse prepares the way for a fragment of another and earlier Psalm; but it is impossible to dogmatize in such a

God hath spoken in his holiness; I will exult: 6
I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.
Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; 7
Ephraim also is the defence of mine head;
Judah is my sceptre.
Moab is my washpot; 8
Upon Edom will I cast my shoe:
Philistia, shout thou because of me.

---

matter, and whatever the history of its composition the Psalm should now be studied as one whole.

Render 'Thy beloved ones,' the word being plural and referring to Israel.

6. Some interpreters, following LXX, translate 'God hath spoken in His sanctuary,' i. e. an oracle had been received by the High Priest, perhaps by Urim and Thummim. The clause, however, more probably means 'hath promised by His holiness'; compare 'hath sworn by his holiness,' Amos iv. 2. If this be so, are these the actual words of a traditional oracular utterance, or the poet's vigorous phrasing of the general promise given to David in 2 Sam. vii. 9? We incline to the former view. **I will exult:** God is certainly the speaker, and is represented as triumphantly parcelling out the land of Canaan for His people's inheritance.

The selection of places appears to be made in order to represent the possession of the whole county by the united tribes. Shechem and Succoth (near to the Jabbok) represent the west and east of Jordan respectively.

7. Gilead and Manasseh stand for the east of Jordan, Ephraim and Judah for the west, including both north and south; the two leading tribes being named which were often rivals and apt to be jealous of one another. Ephraim is the helmet on the warrior's head, and Judah the sceptre in the lawgiver's hand. Compare Gen. xlix. 10.

8. As the land of Canaan is wholly God's and has been given by Him to His people, so the nations around are absolutely in His power and are to be reduced to abject and degrading servitude. The vessel in which the feet are washed, the slave to whom the warrior throws his sandals to be cleaned, symbolize the degradation to which Moab and Edom were to be subjected and the haughty contempt of the conqueror for their boasted strength. If R. V. text **Upon Edom** is correct, the reference is to a possible, but not clearly established custom of throwing a shoe upon a piece of land to claim possession of it. The marginal rendering 'Unto Edom' seems, however, preferable.

9 Who will bring me into the strong city?
Who hath led me unto Edom?
10 Hast not thou, O God, cast us off?
And thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts.
11 Give us help against the adversary:
For vain is the help of man.
12 Through God we shall do valiantly:
For he it is that shall tread down our adversaries.

---

and then the explanation is either as given above (compare Matt. iii. 11) or, as Duhm suggests, Edom is the corner into which soiled sandals are tossed when taken off.

In the last line, A. V. text 'Triumph thou because of me,' with the marginal note explaining that irony is intended, hardly gives the writer's meaning. If the Hebrew pointing is preserved, the **shout** which Philistia is to raise must be either that of terror or of loyal acclaim; but a slight change would give, 'Over Philistia will I shout in triumph,' as in cviii. 9, and this reading we should certainly accept.

9. After quoting this encouraging oracle, the Psalmist applies it to present circumstances. The connexion of thought is this. Whereas the oracle has spoken of triumph over Edom, at the moment Edom constitutes a great danger, an apparently insuperable obstacle, and the people are encouraged to remember that though present difficulties are great, the God whose promises are here recalled is able to give complete victory to His people.

In this light, the second line of this verse cannot mean as R. V. gives it, **Who hath led me unto Edom?** but the perfect tense must be understood as A. V. and R. V. marg., in the sense of 'who will,' or 'can lead me' into such an impregnable fortress as Petra?

10. Again we find a difference between R. V. on the one hand and A. V. with R. V. marg. on the other. The latter rendering makes hope in God to begin in this verse; we prefer R. V. text, **Hast not thou ... cast us off?** that is, 'How can we gain the victory when God Himself seems to have abandoned us?'

11, 12. The soreness of the need drives God's people to prayer; out of the very depths of despair a cry may go up to God. Such cry is sure to be heard, a favourable answer is given and faith is reinforced, so that the Psalmist can end, as believers love to do, with the note of glad expectation which is in itself a presage of victory.

For the Chief Musician; on a stringed instrument. *A Psalm* 61
of David.

Hear my cry, O God; 1
Attend unto my prayer.
From the end of the earth will I call unto thee, when my 2
heart is overwhelmed:
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

PSALM LXI. A ROYAL PRAYER.

An earnest and touching supplication, by a king, or for a king. If the inscription is followed and David be understood to be the author, the Psalm must have been written during Absalom's rebellion and his own absence from Jerusalem. There is nothing in the Psalm absolutely inconsistent with such authorship, though the expression of verse 2, 'from the end of the earth,' must in that case be understood as the hyperbole of poetry and pious longing. Most modern critics place the Psalm much later, but only agree in opposing Davidic authorship. Hezekiah, Zedekiah, Antiochus the Great, and Simon the Maccabee are amongst the names suggested for 'the king' of verse 6. If the Psalm be understood as written by one who himself was far from Palestine, praying for himself, his country, and his king, the period of Zedekiah perhaps suits the circumstances best. It is, however, quite possible that a king should speak of himself in the third person, and in that case no name is so suitable as that of David.

This short Psalm breathes petition in its first half, verses 1–4, and confidence in the second, verses 5–8. For 'Neginah' (A. V.) see Introd. p. 15. **On a stringed instrument** (R. V.) probably represents the meaning, though the form of the word is unusual.

1. Many of the Psalmist's prayers are cries, in the literal sense of the word. Driver translates 'ringing cry,' suitable for the expression of joy; here 'piercing cry' (Cheyne) is better.

2. From the end of the earth, not, as some, 'the land.' Either the phrase is used by one who was literally an exile far away from Jerusalem, or by one who in the intensity of his longing for the house of God felt himself to be as if at the ends of the earth. Render 'do I call unto thee,' (now) 'when my heart fainteth; lead me up upon a rock that is too high for me.'

Amongst the several interpretations of this last figure we must exclude such as understand the rock to be a difficulty which the Psalmist cannot surmount. There remain those which view God Himself as the rock of shelter which casts a broad shadow, suggested by A. V. and R. V., and those which interpret the word,

3 For thou hast been a refuge for me,
A strong tower from the enemy.
4 I will dwell in thy tabernacle for ever:
I will take refuge in the covert of thy wings. [Selah
5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows:
Thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy name.

---

as is usual in the Psalter, to indicate a place of refuge, to which the Psalmist by his own effort cannot climb. The Hebrew means literally to 'lead on,' a condensed expression for 'lead me to and place me on.' We would therefore translate, 'Lead me up upon the rock that is too high for me,' see R. V. marg. The Psalmist is in such straits that he not only needs Divine protection, but Divine help to reach the desired refuge.

3, 4. The meaning of the last verse is now made clear. God Himself has been to the Psalmist in the past a **refuge** and a **strong tower** (verse 3), and with this thought in mind he prays that he may be led to that Rock which is higher than he and can ever shelter him (R. V. text). God's 'tent' or visible abode, with which His presence is indissolubly associated (verse 4), is dear to the Psalmist's heart, and with this in view he prays that he may be led once again to that asylum which he cannot reach by unaided effort (R. V. margin).

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to separate the spiritual from the material element in the prayer of the Psalmist, to distinguish between symbol and thing symbolized. The association of a spiritual presence of God with a definite locality was always close under the old covenant, and the lofty conceptions of worship given by Christ in John iv. 21–24 have not even yet fully pervaded Christendom.

5. Unless we know the circumstances of the writer, we cannot decide whether the tenses in this verse indicate past experience or express confidence for the future. If David be the speaker, it must be understood that Absalom's rebellion has been crushed, but the king is not yet restored. If a pious Israelite of the later monarchy be in question, these 'prophetic perfects' express his assurance that God will be faithful to His covenant. Similarly, on the former hypothesis, the word 'me' should be inserted as in R. V.; on the latter, the marginal rendering is preferable—'Thou hast granted possession unto them that fear thy name,' i. e. wilt never leave thine own people without the inheritance which is theirs by covenant, with a primary reference to the land of Promise

Thou wilt prolong the king's life: 6
His years shall be as many generations.
He shall abide before God for ever: 7
O prepare lovingkindness and truth, that they may preserve him.
So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, 8
That I may daily perform my vows.

For the Chief Musician; after the manner of Jeduthun. A Psalm of David. **62**

My soul waiteth only upon God: 1

---

itself and a general allusion to that 'heritage' which is the portion of God's people wherever they dwell.

6. If a king speaks these words, he alludes to himself in the third person because the promise of long life and abundant posterity was made officially to David and his dynasty (2 Sam. vii); but the interpretation which makes this a prayer for the king, with assurance that it will be answered, is simpler and more natural.

7. abide corresponds to 'be established' in 2 Sam. vii. 12, 13, 16, the standard expression of the promise to David's 'house.'

prepare, *lit.* 'appoint' or 'give charge to' Lovingkindness and Truth as celestial ministrants, that they may guard and keep him. Compare lvii. 3, where the same messengers are spoken of as sent forth to deliver God's servant.

8. The use of the first person in this last verse favours the view of those who understand David to be the speaker throughout. On the other hand, their transition from a prayer for the king to a declaration of personal thanksgiving and resolve is surely not unnatural. Later Jewish interpretation made the whole Psalm national, and though this was probably not its primary significance, the individual Israelite may well stand for the whole people in his resolve to be faithful to his allegiance and render praise and service to God, when God in His mercy favours Zion, guards its king, and bestows their full inheritance upon those who fear His name.

Psalm LXII. Trust in God Alone.

This Psalm is like xxxix. in style, in its use of words, and in its title. Ewald, Perowne, and others attribute it to the same author: the former says, 'a prophet of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes and one of the great pillars of the true religion in strife with the dissolute men of his time.' Kirkpatrick finds affinities with Ps. iv,

From him *cometh* my salvation.
2 He only is my rock and my salvation:
He is my high tower; I shall not be greatly moved.
3 How long will ye set upon a man,
That ye may slay *him*, all of you,

---

and (with Delitzsch) inclines to place the Psalm as David's at the time of Absalom's rebellion. Baettigen and others interpret it of the sufferings of the community during the Maccabæan, or, at earliest, the Persian period. There is nothing clearly to prove, or certainly to disprove, any of these theories, though we incline to follow Ewald. What is more important is to mark the unusual tenacity and strength of the Psalmist's confidence. More triumphant Psalms may easily be found; it would not be easy to point to a more signal illustration of the quiet, invincible assurance which marks the 'iustum ac tenacem propositi virum.' The three stanzas 1–4, 5–8, and 9–12 do but repeat the main theme.

For **Jeduthun** see Introd. to Ps. xxxix, possibly the same as Ethan (1 Chron. xv. 17, &c.), a leader of the Temple choir.

1. The opening word strikes the keynote—**Only**! A comment upon this particle is given in Ps. xxxix, but as it occurs six times in this Psalm, and its repetition stamps the whole lyric with a characteristic impress, it will be well to understand it thoroughly.

The usage of this word *ak* is given by the dictionaries as twofold: (1) it asseverates, with the meaning *surely*, either in reference to (*a*) an acknowledged, or (*b*) a newly perceived truth; (2) it restricts, with the meaning *only*, either (*a*) in relation to the context = 'howbeit,' or (*b*) in relation to ideas generally, with a strong exclusive force. It is not difficult to see, however, that these meanings are closely connected, and whichever of the two predominates the other is probably present in the background. A strong assertion, with a side reference to other possible alternatives strenuously excluded—as if the speaker would say 'Yes, but after all, and in spite of all, *this* remains the one truth on the subject'—appears to give the full meaning. 'Only upon God doth my soul silently wait': this 'wise passiveness' of the spirit, waiting in stillness for God to speak and act, is illustrated briefly in xxxix. 2, more fully in Ps. xxxvii.

2. The wise man will do nothing but look in one direction for help, when from no direction but that one can help come. Hence the expectation of verse 1 corresponds to the assertion of verse 2; calm certainty being characteristic of both clauses alike.

3. A sudden and vigorous outburst of indignant defiance. The Psalmist has been silent God-wards, but his foes have been pressing

Like a bowing wall, like a tottering fence?
They only consult to thrust him down from his excellency; 4
They delight in lies:
They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.
[Selah
My soul, wait thou only upon God; 5
For my expectation is from him.
He only is my rock and my salvation: 6
He is my high tower; I shall not be moved.
With God is my salvation and my glory: 7
The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.
Trust in him at all times, ye people; 8
Pour out your heart before him:

---

him sore, and he turns upon them, one man at bay against a host. 'How long will ye rush upon a man, battering him, all of you?' Only too glad if the strong wall they have been assaulting gives any sign of tottering to its fall. The A. V. misleads by inserting 'Ye shall be'; if words are supplied at all, we should read 'as though he were a bowing wall,' &c.

4. Another **only** marks the character and action of the enemies; their one object is to compass the Psalmist's overthrow. Not in appearance, however; their assaults are not always overt. They had learned how to use the honeyed phrases of 'the candied tongue' and to 'crook the pregnant hinges of the knee.' But their inward curses are more audible than they had thought, and their victim is not deceived by their protestations.

5. The calm confidence of verse 1 has been disturbed by the thought of the baseness of these hypocrites. The Psalmist recalls his soul to her earlier mood and bids her turn once more to the only quarter from whence hope and help can come.

6, 7. Repetition, but without tautology. Faith has ascended another turn of the spiral way; 'I shall not be greatly moved' has become 'I shall not be moved in any wise.' The slightly varied recurrence of the phrase which expressed confidence in the first stanza falls musically upon the ear with a distinctly poetical effect, such as mediaeval singers produced in the triolet and the rondeau.

8. An exhortation such as is found in Psalms xxiv, 1, and other 'prophetic' Psalms. **Ye people** is best understood of Israel; not the world at large, nor the Psalmist's immediate disciples, but, as the LXX following another reading, 'the whole assembly of

God is a refuge for us. [Selah

9 Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high
degree are a lie:
In the balances they will go up;
They are together lighter than vanity.
10 Trust not in oppression,
And become not vain in robbery:
If riches increase, set not your heart *thereon.*
11 God hath spoken once,
Twice have I heard this;
That power belongeth unto God:
12 Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy:
For thou renderest to every man according to his
work.

---

the people.' The personal Deliverer will prove to be a national Refuge.

9. Here *ak* introduces a reference to other grounds of confidence. With firm hand the Psalmist sweeps them all away. Two words for 'man' are used here, as in xlix. 21, to distinguish the lofty and the lowly: alike they are but 'a breath,' or worse, **a lie**: weighed in the scales of the sanctuary, **they go up**; for all of them, together, high and low alike, are 'lighter than a breath.'

10. Hence a lesson which the prophet would impress upon his generation—one more needed under the later monarchy than in David's time—not to trust in wealth unjustly acquired, for such prosperity is hollow and deceptive.

11, 12. And, to give weight to his warning, the Psalmist gives the substance of a revelation repeatedly impressed on his own mind as by a direct voice from heaven. The emphatic form of the utterance 'once, yea twice,' is similar to the usage in Proverbs, 'three things, yea four,' xxx. 15; 'six things, yea seven,' vi. 16.

The oracle says that Power and Mercy, Strength and Loving-kindness, should go always together—are to be found, indeed in the full sense, in God alone; therefore in Him, and in Him alone, should the people trust. It is interesting to note that in the mind of the truly religious Israelite there is no contradistinction between mercy and justice. To render to every man according to his work is a mark of love as well as power, and is possible only to perfect power and perfect love combined in the All-perfect.

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. 63

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: 1

PSALM LXIII. MORNING ORISONS.

From early times in the Christian Church this Psalm has been used for morning devotion. The Apostolical Constitutions refer to it as beginning the worship of the day, and Athanasius and Chrysostom commend it for the purpose. But it is not, properly speaking, a morning prayer. Greek and Latin versions alike favour the idea through their rendering of the opening words, and all the English versions keep the word 'early.' The Psalm, however, is the expression of earnest longing for God and His house, on the part of one who is far from the sanctuary and in circumstances of personal difficulty and danger. The tone of lofty spiritual aspiration which pervades the earlier portion is akin to that of Pss. xlii. and lxxxiv, but in this respect the Psalm before us represents perhaps the high-water mark of the Psalter.

If the Psalm were written by David, as the title suggests, no more appropriate occasion could be found than **when he was in the wilderness of Judah**, not during the persecution of Saul, but at the time of the rebellion of Absalom. The circumstances are recorded in 2 Sam. xv.-xvii. Absalom had 'stolen the hearts of the men of Israel.' The king and his followers had effected a hasty flight, the ark had been sent back to the city, the self-exiled were 'faint in the wilderness,' though refreshed by the kindly feeling of an Ittai and a Ziba; and David, oppressed by the consciousness of having brought trouble upon himself and of having been unfaithful to his earlier allegiance to Jehovah, doubtless longed for renewed communion with God, and the visible tokens of the presence of God, in safety and in peace again. It is quite intelligible, moreover, that in David this deep and earnest religious feeling might be blended with the passionate denunciation of enemies with which the Psalm closes, and the mention of 'the king' in verse 11 fits the circumstances of David better than any other that can be named.

Nevertheless, it is most probable that this beautiful lyric, with its darkened and troubled close, belongs to a much later period. The title is vague, and apparently refers to 1 Sam. xxiii. and xxiv, when David was not yet king, while verse 11 cannot refer to Saul. Certain expressions in the Psalm (verses 2 and 3 and elsewhere) point to a later date. The allusions to enemies do not fit the occasion of Absalom's rebellion. It is true that 'if the reference of the Psalm to David is abandoned, it is idle to speculate as to the author and his circumstances' (Kirkpatrick). There is nothing to prevent the modern interpreter from illustrat-

My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee,
In a dry and weary land, where no water is.
2 So have I looked upon thee in the sanctuary,
To see thy power and thy glory.
3 For thy lovingkindness is better than life;
My lips shall praise thee.

---

ing the Psalm by a reference to David's experiences, or to those of later saints; but no conclusion may be safely based upon the tradition embodied in the title, whilst for our own part we are quite unwilling to accept the sweeping assumption which would postpone all highly spiritual utterances in the Psalter to some late post-Exilic period. The value of the Psalm is not impaired, though its interest may be somewhat diminished, by our ignorance of its authorship.

1. Two names for God are here employed, but they cannot be accurately distinguished, and perhaps Elohim in the address is a substitute for Yahweh.

R. V. marg. is right in its rendering, 'Earnestly will I seek thee.' The root of the word is the same as that from which 'day-break' is derived, but the usage in such passages as Prov. viii. 17 is distinctly in favour of 'seek diligently' (R.V.), not 'early' as in A.V.

soul and **flesh** represent the whole man. The phrase **dry and weary land** perhaps gave rise to the tradition concerning the wilderness of Judah, but in any case it must not be understood literally. It is spiritual drought from which the Psalmist is suffering.

2. He recalls the past, the high communion with God which he has enjoyed **in the sanctuary**—an expression which may refer to the worship of God before the ark, but more probably indicates the Temple-worship. The only difficulty lies in the introductory word 'So,' and concerns the exact sense in which the past is recalled and its relation to the present. The transposition of clauses effected in A. V. is grammatically possible, but R. V. almost certainly gives the meaning, 'Thus have I gazed upon Thee in the sanctuary,' eager to see that revelation of majesty and glory which has been granted there to worshippers like Isaiah (vi. 1-3). There the Psalmist has strained his wistful eyes and been satisfied; here also he earnestly seeks that he may find.

3. A further reason for spiritual longing. The Psalmist has beheld not only God's glorious majesty, but the tenderness of His love; and the thought of this, whilst impelling him to seek for fuller revelation, inspires present thanksgiving. It is true that the

So will I bless thee while I live: 4
I will lift up my hands in thy name.
My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; 5
And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips;
When I remember thee upon my bed, 6
And meditate on thee in the night watches.
For thou hast been my help, 7
And in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.
My soul followeth hard after thee: 8
Thy right hand upholdeth me.

---

connexion of thought between the halves of verses 2 and 3 is not quite clear, and Hupfeld conjectures that a transposition of clauses has taken place in every verse down to the end of 9. Delitzsch thinks the *chiasmus* (crossing) of clauses to be intentional on the part of the poet. Little difficulty will be found if the clauses are taken as they stand and some little latitude be allowed—such as must be granted to Hebrew conjunctions—in the rendering of the connecting particles.

4. So has not the same meaning as in verse 2. It seems to = 'accordingly' or 'therefore.' Longing has now passed into enjoyment, prayer is lost in praise.

5. Again the language is purely metaphorical. He who sent water to Israel in the desert has quenched the Psalmist's thirst; He who fed His people with manna can satisfy the hungry soul: compare Pss. xxii. 26, xxxvi. 8. No allusion to sacrificial feasts need be supposed.

6. The insertion of **And** in the second line, thus throwing the whole verse into close dependence upon the last, appears to be a mistake. R. V. marg. correctly renders 'I meditate'; and in that case the verse stands alone, giving an illustration of the way in which the soul is sustained and comforted by God's presence. *Lit.* 'night-thoughts' are intended, and the allusion makes this the more appropriate for a morning Psalm. The Jewish night contained three watches; compare 'the middle watch' in Judges vii. 19.

7. Two co-ordinate clauses, referring to past and future respectively, and both together expressing that exultant confidence into which the Psalmist has passed after the opening stage of strong desire is over.

8. The mutual relation between God and His trusting servant is here beautifully described. The soul cleaves to the strong right Hand which upholds, and as the sustaining Hand draws the

9 But those that seek my soul, to destroy it,
Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
10 They shall be given over to the power of the sword:
They shall be a portion for foxes.
11 But the king shall rejoice in God:
Every one that sweareth by him shall glory;
For the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

64 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

1 Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint:

---

upheld spirit follows close. Such action and reaction of the Divine and the human belong to the very life of true religion; desire leads to delight and delight quickens desire. Neither chronology nor logic must be allowed to determine the conditions of the communion of souls. 'Abide in me and I in you' describes a relation which may be enjoyed, but cannot be defined.

9. An abrupt descent from heaven to earth, from communion with God to wrath against man. The Psalmist feels no inconsistency; his belief in God necessitates his conviction that those who oppose Him will be destroyed.

lower parts of the earth: is here a synonym for Sheol, the under-world. So perhaps in Isa. xliv. 23, but this is doubtful; while in Ps. cxxxix. 15 the phrase has another meaning. For use in N. T. see Eph. iv. 9.

10. They shall be slain by the sword of justice and their corpses left to be the prey of jackals—unhonoured and unsung.

11. The connexion here, as in lxi. 6, seems to imply that 'the king' is the speaker, who refers to himself in the third person. He is identified with the cause of God; he and those who with him reverently invoke the name of God shall triumph and be had in honour, whilst all those who are identified with the cause of falsehood, perhaps are worshippers of false gods, shall be put to silence for ever in the grave.

Psalm LXIV. Judgement upon the Wicked.

A picture is here presented, very familiar to all readers of the Psalter, but in this instance sketched with specially vigorous strokes, of the manifold and malicious machinations of the wicked against the righteous and the Divine judgement which awaits them. These two ideas occupy the two parts of the Psalm, verses 1-6 and 7-12 respectively. The treatment possesses no very distinctive features, though the words are no mere echoes from other writers,

Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
Hide me from the secret counsel of evil-doers; 2
From the tumult of the workers of iniquity:
Who have whet their tongue like a sword, 3
And have aimed their arrows, even bitter words:
That they may shoot in secret places at the perfect: 4
Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.
They encourage themselves in an evil purpose; 5
They commune of laying snares privily;
They say, Who shall see them?
They search out iniquities; We have accomplished, *say* 6
they, a diligent search:
And the inward thought of every one, and the heart, is deep.

---

neither is there any clear indication of date. Earlier commentators were inclined to compare this Psalm with vii, and assign it, as in the title, to David, but most now place it in the post-Exilic period. The language does not very appropriately fit either Saul's persecution or Absalom's rebellion.

1. complaint (R. V.) rather than 'prayer' (A. V.). See Job vii. 13 and the fuller parallel in Ps. lv. 2.

Some commentators render 'Thou wilt guard—hide,' &c., the future of confident expectation rather than the imperative of petition. **Fear of the enemy** means the terror which he inspires.

2. Secret plotting is contrasted with open tumultuous raging as in Ps. ii. 1, 2. But the former seems to predominate in this case. The position is that of a righteous man living in the midst of an ordered but godless community, not of one persecuted by a king, nor of a king driven from his throne by rebellion.

3, 4. Parallels to this phraseology are numerous, especially in Ps. lv, where the situation is somewhat similar. For the tongue as a sword see lv. 21 and lvii. 4. For the shooting of arrows, either bitter words or evil devices, see xi. 2 and lviii. 7. For the secret machinations of the evil-doer see x. 8 and xvii. 12.

5, 6. The care with which these treacherous plots are conceived and hatched is here described. The conspirators strengthen one another in evil and are agreed that there is no eye of Providence to detect them, no hand of Providence to expose them.

The word translated **search** hardly conveys the idea in English. Render 'They have carefully devised iniquities; we have perfected,

7 But God shall shoot at them;
With an arrow suddenly shall they be wounded.
8 So they shall be made to stumble, their own tongue being against them:
All that see them shall wag the head.
9 And all men shall fear;
And they shall declare the work of God,
And shall wisely consider of his doing.
10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him;
And all the upright in heart shall glory.

---

say they, our careful device; and each man's inmost thought, and his heart, is deep.' The only period in David's history which at all corresponds with this picture would be his early life at the court of Saul.

7. But no heart is so deep that its thoughts are hidden from God, and no plot is so perfect but He can frustrate it. God has His arrows and will use them. The tenses here convey 'perfect historical certainty'; the Psalmist is as sure of the coming judgement as if he saw it with his eyes.

8. Render 'And they are made to stumble': *lit.* 'they make to stumble,' the 'they' being impersonal and conveying the meaning of a passive voice. R.V. marg. understands 'they' of the persecuted righteous, which is cumbrous and unnecessary. **Their own tongue being against them** conveys in a striking form the idea so often expressed of the wicked being caught in their own trap and falling into the pit they have made for another.

For **wag the head** in scorn, see Ps. xxii. 7; Jer. xlviii. 27.

9. The end shall be secured which the Psalmists chiefly desire when they contemplate with satisfaction the overthrow of the wicked. The moral government of God shall be vindicated, men in general shall be struck with awe and shall declare the judgement to be the act of God and shall understand His work. The satisfaction is that of the spectator or reader of the drama who rejoices in the administration of 'poetic justice.'

10. This end is secured by—what happens so seldom in real life—the perfect identification of one side with the cause of righteousness, as the other is with that of iniquity. The Psalmist has not the slightest doubt that he and his friends, who appear to be few and feeble, are **the righteous** and **the upright in heart.** Their

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm. A Song of David. **65**

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: 1
And unto thee shall the vow be performed.
O thou that hearest prayer, 2

---

part is to 'take refuge' in Jehovah and **glory**, or enjoy holy exultation in the thought of His supreme power and their own perfect security and peace.

Psalm LXV. A Harvest Thanksgiving.

The Psalm includes much more than praise for the blessings of a fruitful earth. It includes history as well as nature in its scope, and whilst it may have been intended for a festival, either at the presentation of first-fruits or at the ingathering of harvest, verses 7 and 8 would appear to point to a recent national deliverance. Delitzsch has suggested the period of reviving prosperity after the retirement of Sennacherib (see Isa. xxvii. 30), whilst some MSS. of the LXX refer it to the return from captivity, 'a song of Jeremiah and Ezekiel'! Baethgen thinks that the universalist tone of the Psalm proves it to be later than the time of the second Isaiah.

On the whole, the period of Hezekiah fits the conditions fairly well, but the Psalm is general in its character, and in modernized forms has been sung with appropriateness under very varied conditions. One somewhat curious use has been made of it, since it forms part of the Office for the Dead in the services of both the Eastern and the Western Church.

It falls naturally into three parts: approach to God, 1-4; praise to Him as Ruler of all nations, 5-8; and as Giver of fruitful seasons and the abundant harvest of the present year, 9-13.

For the word **Song** in the title, as a more general description than Psalm, see Introd. p. 17.

1. *lit.* 'For thee, O God, praise is silent in Zion,' which may either be interpreted as in A.V. and R.V. **praise waiteth** (R.V. marg. renders 'There shall be silence and praise,' surely an intolerable alternative), or with a slightly different pointing we may read with LXX 'Praise is comely.' The last is one of those smooth and easy ways out of a difficulty which the careful textual critic usually suspects. Probably the meaning is that praise, like prayer, is often truest when in deep and still devotion it waits in the presence of God. The thought of the Hebrew worshipper, however, is not that of the modern poet, whose rapture 'transcends the imperfect offices of prayer and praise,' but that in reverence he is silent for a while before his king and then pours forth thanksgiving and supplication.

Unto thee shall all flesh come.
3 Iniquities prevail against me:
As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.
4 Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach *unto thee*,
That he may dwell in thy courts:
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house,
The holy place of thy temple.
5 By terrible things thou wilt answer us in righteousness,

2. If **all flesh** implies, as it should, all mankind, it does not follow that a late date must be assigned to the Psalm. In the time of Hezekiah Israel's outlook upon the nations had been greatly widened, and the prophecy embodied in Isa. ii. 2, Micah iv. 1, shows that the prophetic range of vision at this time included all peoples.

3. R. V. 'words' or 'matters of iniquities' shows that the Hebrew emphasizes the counts of the indictment which the Psalmist enumerates in his self-accusation. The thought is that of xl. 12, but the confession that his sins are too strong for him is precisely the best preparation for the forgiveness which the next clause anticipates. **Thou** is emphatic: only God can purge away such evils.

The alternation between singular and plural, **me** and **our**, suggests the relation in the Psalmist's mind between the individual and the community. He does not make the distinction so sharply as modern habits of thought require. He praises and prays as a representative Israelite. For a treatment of the whole subject see Introd. to Vol. II; compare also note on lv. 12.

4. The whole nation is privileged to enjoy closeness of access to God in His temple. The Psalmist contemplates such an approach for the nation by means of its representatives in the worship of a great festival; and, after emphasizing the happiness of those permitted thus to draw near, he expresses the determination rightly to use the opportunity. The force of the cohortative, literally translated 'let us be satisfied,' may be given as 'we would fain be satisfied' with the rich supplies of grace which all need, but which all cannot obtain, as we can in Thy holy place, the home for Thy specially favoured guests.

5. Render 'Thou dost answer us'; the meaning is not that in answer to the prayer now offered God will greatly intervene, but a general description is given of God's continuous regard for His people, with special reference to a recent manifestation of it.

terrible things, i. e. recent events in their terror-striking

O God of our salvation;
Thou that art the confidence of all the ends of the earth,
And of them that are afar off upon the sea:
Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; 6
Being girded about with might:
Which stilleth the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their 7
waves,
And the tumult of the peoples.
They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at 8
thy tokens:
Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening
to rejoice.

---

effect upon the nations, inspiring awe in all who witness them; these, however, are all done **in righteousness**, and their chief significance lies in the vindication of Divine justice and equity.

The intervention in question was in Israel's favour and implied 'salvation' for them, but it is viewed as an act of the God of the whole earth, who may be and ought to be trusted by all nations alike, far and near. The description of universality is as complete as Jewish geography could make it, including **the ends of the earth** and **the sea, afar off** (R. V. marg.).

6, 7. Render 'Setting fast the mountains with His strength, girding Himself with might, Thou who stillest,' &c. He is God of nature as well as of nations, and the Psalmist passes easily and naturally from one to the other. The two great symbols of strength and majesty in this world are the mountains and the ocean: the everlasting hills so firmly fixed that no strength can move them, the waves of the sea so restless that no might can control them. But it is God who establishes the great mountains in their place and stills the waves by a word from His lips. Surely the nations ought to fear, and may place their whole confidence in such a God as this.

8. Fear and joy characterize His worshippers. **Thy tokens** means the signs of God's power and presence which are manifest even in regions so remote that 'God Himself scarce seemed there to be'; nay, the regions of the farthest east and loneliest west are made to 'sing for joy' by Him who fills and illumines all. **Outgoings** applies properly to the east, whence the sun starts to run its race, but may be applied to the 'portals' (Kay) of morning and evening alike. All may well rejoice because the King, whose glory is thus

9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it,
Thou greatly enrichest it;
The river of God is full of water:
Thou providest them corn, when thou hast so prepared
the earth.
10 Thou waterest her furrows abundantly;
Thou settlest the ridges thereof:
Thou makest it soft with showers;
Thou blessest the springing thereof.
11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness;
And thy paths drop fatness.
12 They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness:
And the hills are girded with joy.

---

celebrated, rules in righteousness—only evil-doers have cause to dread His might.

9. Some would render 'Thou hast visited the land and made it plentiful,' finding in the words special acknowledgement of a good season. So Kirkpatrick, who joins the clause **greatly enriching it** with the former part of the verse.

The 'brook of God' is the rain, former and latter, which He sends in its season. In the last line render, with R. V. marg., 'for so preparest Thou the earth.'

10. Render 'Abundantly watering its furrows, levelling its ridges, Thou softenest it with showers, its upgrowth Thou dost bless.' The point of view here is that of spring-time, in which the effect of winter rain becomes visible, rather than of autumn when the 'upgrowth' is complete. But the following verses show that the Psalmist is offering a general thanksgiving for what Hooker called 'God's blessings springing out of my mother earth,' and does not confine himself to the aspects of one particular season.

11. *Lit.* 'Thou hast crowned the year of thy goodness'; if this be the meaning, the words point to the harvest as the culmination of a year full of bounty. The translation of A. V. and R. V. is based on a possible, though somewhat doubtful, construction of the Hebrew. It gives the better sense, and some grammarians defend this interpretation.

thy paths drop fatness, i. e. the steps of God's path as He passes over the land are marked by enriching showers, such as cover even the valley of weeping with blessings, lxxxiv. 6.

12. The word 'wilderness' (*midbār*) should be rightly under-

The pastures are clothed with flocks; 13
The valleys also are covered over with corn;
They shout for joy, they also sing.

For the Chief Musician. A Song, a Psalm. 66
Make a joyful noise unto God, all the earth: 1

---

stood. Not only does it contain 'pastures,' it is itself the open country, the very land of pasturage, as distinguished from enclosed arable 'fields.'

13. This closing description is full of graphic metaphor. Not only are the hills girded with garlands of rejoicing (verse 12), but the white fleeces of the sheep seem to clothe the meadows, the sheltered vales between the hills are gaily decked with wheat, and together, or in response to one another, they shout with all their heart, 'yea, they sing'! Delitzsch says that meadows and corn-fields cannot sing, and that 'the expression demands men as subject.' This is an unusually prosaic touch on the part of a spirited as well as learned commentator. But it is true that it needs men with poetic souls to hear that joyous singing, and men with devout hearts to hear the hymn which the hills and valleys raise and re-echo to God.

Psalm LXVI. Thanksgiving for Deliverance.

Is the deliverance here celebrated personal, or national? The first twelve verses strike the national, the last eight the personal note. Some interpreters consider that the two elements are distinct, that two voices are heard, or even that two Psalms have been combined. Others, e. g. Kirkpatrick, 'hear in these verses the voice of the responsible and representative leader of the nation (not necessarily himself the author of the Psalm) who identifies its fortunes and interests with his own,' while the prevailing modern method is to merge the personal and individual element entirely in the life of the community. On this last supposition, the church-nation speaks from verse 13 onwards, as well as in the former part of the Psalm. With this last view we cannot agree; but, given the individual singer, it seems the most natural thing in the world that he should first praise God for national mercies and then touch upon personal blessings, or give thanks in the reverse order. Only it is to be borne in mind (see note on lxv. 3) that the sense of common national life was stronger, and of individual privilege and responsibility much weaker, in the Jew than in modern western civilization.

As to the deliverance referred to, the choice appears to lie

2 Sing forth the glory of his name:
Make his praise glorious.
3 Say unto God, How terrible are thy works!
Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies
submit themselves unto thee.
4 All the earth shall worship thee,
And shall sing unto thee;
They shall sing to thy name. [Selah
5 Come, and see the works of God;
He is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.

---

between the destruction of Sennacherib's army and the Return from exile. The data for a judgement are lacking; but here, as in Ps. lxv, some consider that the universalism of the Psalm demands the later date, a view we do not share.

The first stanza (1–4) calls upon all lands to praise and acknowledge God, for (5–7) He has proved His power in history, notably at the time of the Exodus. The third stanza (8–12) calls upon the nations to recognize the fresh intervention by which God has delivered His chosen people, while in the last two, 13–15 and 16–20, the individual speaker pays his own tribute of worship to God and calls upon men to hear his testimony.

1, 2. The whole earth is to be the concert-chamber and all its inhabitants the chorus; no narrower sphere will suffice to set forth the praises of God for the deliverance now celebrated. In the last line the verb is used with two accusatives—**Make His praise glory** or 'Make glory His praise.' The former is suggested by the order of the words in Hebrew, and is adopted in A. V. and R. V.

3. For **terrible** see lxv. 5. The translation 'submit themselves' is insufficient. Render 'Yield feigned obedience,' R. V. marg. (P. B. V. 'be found liars unto thee'), or better, 'must come cringing unto thee.' The same phrase is used in Deut. xxxiii. 29 of the insincere but enforced homage which Israel's enemies shall render to her.

4. The invitation is here turned into a prophecy; willing or unwilling, all must submit.

5. The tone is that of a prophetic teacher who understands the meaning of history and undertakes to explain it to those who will listen. 'Come and see' corresponds to 'come and hear' in verse 16. The address in this case is to the nations, who are bidden to study the past history of Israel and learn its lessons.

He turned the sea into dry land: 6
They went through the river on foot:
There did we rejoice in him.
He ruleth by his might for ever; 7
His eyes observe the nations:
Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. [Selah
O bless our God, ye peoples, 8
And make the voice of his praise to be heard:
Which holdeth our soul in life, 9
And suffereth not our feet to be moved.

---

6. The Exodus is with Psalmists and prophets a standing illustration of God's power and goodness. The passage of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan are examples of different ways in which God can bring His people past or over obstacles.

There is concrete and graphic; it points as with the finger to a landmark in history always conspicuous, always instructive. But the tense of the following verb gives some difficulty. It properly means (1) 'let us rejoice,' R. V. marg., which fits ill with 'He turned' and 'they went,' and is inconsistent with the idea of an address to the nations. On the other hand, (2) **did we rejoice,** while making excellent sense and boldly identifying the Israel of the Psalmist with the Israel of the Exodus, does some violence to grammar. Still, as Delitzsch, after accepting (1) in an earlier edition, in a later edition defends (2), adducing 2 Sam. xxii. 38 as a parallel, it may be considered safe to adopt it.

7. Here the tenses express general truths and continuous Divine action. He who at special moments vouchsafes special manifestations preserves in the intervals a watchful rule against which rebellious nations lift their heads, or tongues, or hands in vain. Thus Isaiah speaks of Sennacherib as lifting his eyes and voice not so much against Jerusalem as against the God of Jerusalem, the Holy One of Israel; 2 Kings xix. 22.

8. Notice that the address is still to the nations at large, although the history of Israel and the special mercies which 'our God' has shown to His chosen people are dwelt upon. The tone recalls Ps. cxxvi. 2, when the nations said, Jehovah hath done great things for them.

9. holdeth our soul: rather, with R.V. marg., 'putteth,' or better, 'hath set our soul in life.' It is not the continuous maintenance of life, but the deliverance from danger of death and setting in safety that is commemorated. For a similar juxtaposition of

10 For thou, O God, hast proved us:
Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.
11 Thou broughtest us into the net;
Thou layedst a sore burden upon our loins.
12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads;
We went through fire and through water;
But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.
13 I will come into thy house with burnt offerings,
I will pay thee my vows,
14 Which my lips have uttered,

---

clauses, in which the keeping of the feet from falling is equivalent to preserving from death, see lvi. 13.

10. This and the two following verses show that a particular deliverance is referred to. Both verbs in this verse are used of metals, for the processes of assaying and smelting; the people have been passed through a refiner's fire, a furnace of terrible testing, but they have come through it safely.

11. Here punishment rather than purification is described. Some doubt arises as to the word translated **net**, some versions and commentators reading 'prison'; also as to the one rendered **sore burden.** The latter occurs only here; the Targum understands it to mean 'chain,' and Baethgen raises the objection that a burden is not laid upon the loins. The LXX and Syriac translate generally 'tribulations.' There is no sufficient reason, however, for departing from R. V.

12. For the strong figure of the first line see Isa. li. 23. As the vanquished in battle are crushed under the horse-hoofs and chariot-wheels of the victorious army, so Israel had suffered outrage and ignominy at the hands of cruel enemies. Fire and water symbolize dangers in all languages, and the 'place of abundance' stands for ease, happiness, prosperity. See xxiii. 5, 'my cup is—abundance!'

13, 14. Ewald's conjecture that the Psalm from this point onwards is a fragment of another composition has this in its favour, that the point of view from which deliverance is henceforth regarded is markedly different; see Introduction. Not only does the first person singular replace the plural, but the attitude of worship, the persons addressed, and the mention of 'iniquity,' all suggest an altered point of view. But though there is difference between the two parts of the Psalm, there is no inconsistency. An individual Israelite, presumably a representative leader, either priest or king, here speaks, as a solo may follow a chorus. He

And my mouth hath spoken, when I was in distress.
I will offer unto thee burnt offerings of fatlings, 15
With the incense of rams;
I will offer bullocks with goats. [Selah
Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, 16
And I will declare what he hath done for my soul.
I cried unto him with my mouth, 17
And he was extolled with my tongue.
If I regard iniquity in my heart, 18
The Lord will not hear:
But verily God hath heard; 19
He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

---

presents himself in the name of the people before the altar of God, bringing the offerings which betoken gratitude and consecration to the service of the Great Deliverer.

15. It seems hardly necessary to examine the details of Levitical ritual, in order to determine the exact significance of the various sacrifices mentioned here. 'Fatlings,' 'rams,' 'goats,' 'bullocks' are mentioned generally and poetically as in Ps. 1 and Isa. i, and in their accumulation the clauses are intended to express ample and abundant oblations. Some have sought, however, to show that the words are carefully chosen, and that the reference is to particular sacrifices 'offered by the nation or its leaders, not by an ordinary private individual' (Kirkpatrick).

16. The address in this verse is to them 'that fear God,' and the deliverance is a private and personal one, 'for my soul.' Taken in relation to the context, it must mean that people of all nations are to listen to the story of what God has done for Israel. **For my soul** in modern phraseology has a distinctively personal and spiritual significance; here it means, for my life when it was in peril.

17. I cried, in supplication; and 'high praise was under my tongue' (R. V. marg.), as we say 'on the lips' or 'on the tip of the tongue,' ready to burst forth in acknowledgement of the answer which was sure to follow.

18, 19. Here again the marginal is better than the textual rendering. Read, 'If I had regarded iniquity . . . the Lord would not hear.' To contemplate evil in the heart while high praise of God is on the tongue is to provoke severe Divine displeasure. The Psalmist claims that he had a 'single eye' (Matt. vi. 22), one that 'looked right on' (Prov. iv. 25), that he had not

20 Blessed be God,
Which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy
from me.

67 For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm, a Song.

1 God be merciful unto us, and bless us,
And cause his face to shine upon us; [Selah

---

a 'double heart' (Ps. xii. 2), hence God has listened to his prayer. It was the absence of 'simplicity and godly sincerity' in the religion of Israel of which the prophets had so often to complain, and which is especially condemned in Ps. l.

20. The Psalmist closes with an ascription of praise to God for His mercy, not with a complacent self-justification on the score of his own righteousness. He does not regard God's hearing of prayer as due to him for his integrity, but as an act of grace for which the Divine name should be praised. Fuller praises 'David's excellent logic,' who, 'when he should have clapped the crown on his own, puts it on God's head.' The logic of saints is not that of the schools. A man who would keep debtor and creditor account with the Almighty concerning his own virtue and the hearing of his prayers would be bankrupt from start to finish. Grace begins and continues, thanksgiving should end the history.

Psalm LXVII. A Festal Thanksgiving.

A short and simple, but triumphant and comprehensive, song of praise. It blends prayer and thanksgiving, like the two preceding Psalms, and was intended for some temple festival, perhaps the Feast of Tabernacles, after a year of exceptional increase. But as in Pss. lxv and lxvi, God's hand is traced in the nation's history, as well as in the processes of nature, and He is praised as the God of the whole earth as well as of Israel. As a canticle for the church, or the nation, or the world, as a thanksgiving at harvest-time, or a prayer for foreign missions, this Psalm is almost equally appropriate, and it has been thus widely and variously used in the Christian worship for centuries. The *Deus misereatur* is never out of place.

For the words **song** and **stringed instruments** in the title, see Introd. pp. 4 and 15.

1. An echo of the priestly blessing, Numb. vi. 24, with the word *Elohim* instead of *Yahweh*, as elsewhere in this Elohistic collection. The Selah in this verse seems awkwardly placed, if it implies an interlude.

That thy way may be known upon earth, 2
Thy saving health among all nations.
Let the peoples praise thee, O God; 3
Let all the peoples praise thee.
O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: 4
For thou shalt judge the peoples with equity,
And govern the nations upon earth. [Selah
Let the peoples praise thee, O God; 5
Let all the peoples praise thee.
The earth hath yielded her increase: 6

---

2. The idea meets us again which has been so prominent in Pss. lxv and lxvi, that there is a close connexion between God's work for His own people and the conversion of the nations at large to His service. They have but to be made acquainted with what He has done for Israel and they will learn to trust Him for themselves. In a fuller sense than the Psalmist imagined this has come to pass.

By **way** is meant the Divine purpose and its accomplishment in history. **Saving health** is an archaism for salvation, but the phrase is one which all would be loth to lose, and it precisely expresses what 'all nations' need.

3, 4. Commentators differ as to the tenses here and elsewhere in the Psalm. Some understand them as presents, some as futures, whilst others—the majority and the best—interpret them as wishes or prayers throughout. In these two verses there can be little doubt that this is the meaning.

The nations are summoned to give thanks; for if they will render their allegiance to the God of Israel they shall gladly prove the equity and excellence of the Divine government. That 'leading' which has been so marked in the history of the chosen people shall be granted as a boon to all.

5. Refrain as in verse 3, somewhat irregularly as it may seem, but aptly placed.

6, 7. In these closing verses R. V. changes the rendering of the tenses from optatives to futures. We think that the instinct which leads us to look for a confident expression of faith and hope before the Psalm closes is right. The only question is where the change should come. Kirkpatrick suggests that it might begin in verse 5, and would certainly effect it in verses 6 and 7. The Revisers seem to have hit the mark best. The refrain should be kept as a prayer: then comes the glad acknowledgement of a fruitful harvest, in itself a token of Divine favour—**the earth hath yielded her**

God, even our own God, shall bless us.
7 God shall bless us;
And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

68 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David, a Song.

1 Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered;

---

increase; and, lastly, the Psalmist breaks forth in assured prophecy that God's blessing will continue to abide upon His own people, and in and through them the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of God.

PSALM LXVIII. A HYMN OF VICTORY.

One of the greatest of the Psalms, notable alike for magnificence of conception and sustained vigour in the presentment of lofty thought. The subject is God as the Leader of the hosts of His people marching through conflict to victory, and passing to the sanctuary in triumphal procession. All commentators are agreed in recognizing the grandeur of the Psalm and the splendour of its diction. Hupfeld, who is not given to superlatives, describes it as 'a perfect hymn, the most glowing, the most spirited, and the most powerful which exists in the whole Psalter.' But all are equally convinced of its difficulty. Delitzsch quotes from an Italian Jewish poet, a contemporary of Dante, who describes all the commentators on the Psalms as gathered in Paradise before King David to contend for a prize, 'When he assigned them all the 68th Psalm as their task, what a thick vapour arose!' Christian interpreters have not been more successful. The dates assigned to the Psalm spread over wellnigh a thousand years, and include authors and occasions the most diverse. A composition which has been assigned by scholarly and able critics alike to the time of David, of Jehoshaphat, and of Hezekiah, to the Return from Captivity, to the age of Nehemiah, the early Greek period, and the war between Ptolemy Philometor and Alexander Balas, B.C. 146, cannot be easy to place and characterize. Cheyne says, 'Many psalms, no doubt, can be fairly well understood without fixing their date, but certainly not the 68th.' If this be true—which we do not admit—the grandest of the Psalms is also unintelligible.

The chief reasons for this difficulty of interpretation and diversity of view are the variety and comprehensiveness of the allusions and quotations, and the obscurity of certain parts of the text. It is studded with parallel passages and phrases which bring it into relation with other Scriptures—'all that is most glorious in the literature of the days of old is concentrated in it'—

Let them also that hate him flee before him.

---

yet there is nothing suggestive of the copyist, it is full of verve, fire, and vigour. The language in places is obscure through its very energy, and modern critics, who indulge freely in the luxury of textual emendation, intersperse numerous asterisks in their renderings of this Psalm to indicate that in their view the text is hopeless. Again, whilst characteristics of this kind usually mark an early date, some words found in the Psalm with their Aramaic affinities point to a comparatively late period.

Nevertheless, if we are not too exacting, it will be found quite possible to understand, enjoy, and spiritually to appreciate this noble Psalm. Its general meaning is clear, some obscurities of detail may be removed, within certain limits its date may probably be fixed, while the main lessons concerning God, His ways, His purposes, His people, and His glory, which are here embodied in lofty poetry, shine clear as stars in the nightly Eastern sky.

It seems to us impossible to maintain the theory of Davidic authorship. True, the reign of David would furnish most suitable occasions for its use, whether the removal of the ark to Zion, or one of the illustrious victories of the period, whilst the mention of the tribes Benjamin and Judah, Zabulon and Naphtali, would be more appropriate then than at any later period. But the religious ideas, some detailed expressions, and the general literary affinities of the Psalm point to a much later date. On the other hand, the triumphant tone of the Psalm and its confident anticipations of the future make it very unlikely that it was written so late as the time of the Ptolemies, in the second century B.C.—a date improbable also on other grounds. There remain the period of the later monarchy and a time soon after the Exile. No suitable occasion presents itself in the time of Jehoshaphat or Hezekiah. The allusions are not to Moab and Edom on the one hand, nor to Assyria on the other, whilst the numerous parallels with the second Isaiah would not be sufficiently accounted for.

We agree, therefore, with some of the best modern critics in understanding the Psalm as an outburst of thanksgiving and hope awakened in the minds of the Jews by what seemed to many of them the new birth of the nation in the Return from Captivity. That such ideas and hopes prevailed is certain, Ps. cxviii and many of the 'Pilgrim' group abundantly testify to this. If those hopes were only in part fulfilled, and the aspirations of the Psalm very imperfectly realized, such disappointments shadowed the whole history of Israel. The date suggested would account for the close parallels between the Psalm and Isa. xl–lxvi, which form a fundamental factor in the literary problem. The chief objections to this view are removed if we understand the Psalm as ideal,

2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away:

---

retrospective, and prospective, treating the whole history of the nation from a prophetic standpoint. It does not follow, because four tribes are named, that they existed distinct in the Psalmist's time; nor, because Egypt is alluded to as an enemy, that war with Egypt was actually going on. Isaiah shows how 'Rahab' had come to stand as a typical name for the world-powers oppressing Israel, and the mention of the **temple at Jerusalem** in verse 29 is clearly symbolic. The Psalmist anticipates the homage which kings are to render to Jehovah in the glorified city and sanctuary of the future.

Read thus, the Psalm is intelligible, appropriate, and effective. But whensoever composed, inspired by whatsoever reminiscences of past victory or expectations of returning prosperity, the Psalm stands as a monument of the invincible faith and inextinguishable hopes of Israel, and a prophecy of spiritual glories in part realized, in part yet to come. The outline of thought may easily be followed, and is not affected by the view taken of occasion and authorship. Verses 1–6 form an introduction in which God appears as Leader and Redeemer of His people, who are bidden to prepare the way of the Conqueror. In 7–18 past history is reviewed: the wonders of the Exodus, the journey through the wilderness, the entry into Canaan, the conquest of its inhabitants, and the choice of Zion as God's special abode, are successively described in highly poetical, but not exaggerated language. The latter half of the Psalm, 19–35, deals with the manifestations of the present and the hopes of the future. But the present is lightly touched on, and only in idealistic phrase, hence it is the less necessary to ascertain the exact epoch referred to. One stanza, 24–27, describes a festal procession to the temple, symbolic of the glory of the conquering King, and this leads on to a picture of the time when all kings and peoples shall pay Him homage, 28–31. A closing stanza, pitched in sublime key, calls upon the nations of the whole earth to praise and serve the God of Israel.

The Psalm is known in Christendom, from its opening words in Latin, as *Exsurgat Deus*. It has been used as the battle-cry of the warrior and the watchword of the down-trodden and oppressed. It has been chanted by Crusaders and Huguenots, by Covenanters and Ironsides. In the Christian Church it aptly strikes the keynote for the worship of Whit-Sunday, and alike by its general strain and by certain notable phrases which distinguish it Ps. lxviii is still fitted for use as an inspiring anthem for those who look for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

1. The Psalm begins with a quotation. With slight modifications this verse is a reproduction of the words of Moses, recorded

As wax melteth before the fire,
So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.
But let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God: 3
Yea, let them rejoice with gladness.
Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: 4
Cast up a high way for him that rideth through the deserts;
His name is JAH; and exult ye before him.

---

in Numb. x. 35, used when the ark led the children of Israel on their journeys in the wilderness. The name Jehovah, however, here becomes Elohim, and the second person imperative is changed into the optative. Hence, instead of 'Arise Jehovah' we read **Let God arise.** Some interpreters translate this and the co-ordinate tenses that follow as presents, others as futures. But the majority of versions and commentators are probably right in understanding the opening verses as a prayer that the ancient watchword of Israel on the march may receive a fresh realization.

2, 3. For the Homeric comparison of vanishing like smoke, see Hos. xiii. 3; and for the melting of wax, Mic. i. 4. **Wicked** and **righteous** correspond here to the heathen and Israel respectively, not to classes of persons within the nation itself.

4. Those who belong to the company of the faithful, who are entering upon this new wilderness-journey under the guidance of that presence which the Ark symbolized, are bidden to chant the praises of their great Leader and to prepare the way for His advent. **Cast up a high way:** it is impossible to miss the parallel with Isa. xl. 3, where the voice heard by the prophet's inner ear bade the exiles to prepare in the wilderness a way for Him who was about to lead them home. In Isa. lvii. 14 and lxii. 10 also the same figure is used, in each case with the addition 'Gather out the stones.' An Oriental monarch on his journeys needs such road-makers or road-menders to go before him, and unless men remove the human hindrances to God's coming He will not appear. The translation 'Extol him that rideth upon the heavens' (A. V.) follows the Targum: other ancient versions render 'Prepare the way,' LXX and Vulgate instead of 'the deserts' read 'the West.'

JAH is a shortened poetical form of Yahweh, compare the well-known word Hallelu-jah. Delitzsch notes that 'the whole cornucopia of Divine names has been poured out upon this Psalm.' *Elohim* occurs twenty-six times, *Adonai* six, while *Yahweh*, *Shaddai*, *El*, and certain combinations of these names are also found in it.

5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,
Is God in his holy habitation.
6 God setteth the solitary in families:
He bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity:
But the rebellious dwell in a parched land.

7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people,
When thou didst march through the wilderness; [Selah
8 The earth trembled,

---

5. The protection of the **fatherless** and **widow** was a standing illustration of righteous and merciful government. These helpless ones were cared for by the legislation of the Book of the Covenant, Exod. xxii. 22; and when the prophet urged the people to reform their ways he bade them to 'judge the fatherless, plead for the widow,' Isa. i. 17. Hence in Ps. cxlvi. 7, 9 a proof that God 'executeth judgement for the oppressed' is that he 'upholdeth the fatherless and widow.' **Holy habitation** here means heaven, as in Deut. xxvi. 15; Isa. lxiii. 15 (where, however, a different word is used).

6. These general descriptions of God's character and methods are intended to prepare the way for the subject proper of the Psalm. An avant-courier or herald declares the virtues and excellences of the coming King.

Render, 'maketh the solitary to dwell in a home' (see R. V. marg.). The deliverance of prisoners (Ps. cxlvi. 7) has been characteristic of Israel's God from the time of the Exodus onwards, and is now about to receive new illustration. The word **rebellious** is understood by some to refer to heathen opponents; others apply it to stubborn Israelites, who would not believe God's word, and did not learn the lessons of exile (Isa. lxv. 2); but it is better to take the statement generally as a characteristic of the Divine moral government, without any specific reference.

7. Again a quotation, with some variations of phraseology: in this instance from the song of Deborah, Judges v. 4, 5. The chief changes consist in the omission of the names Seir and Edom, and, as before, the substitution of Elohim for Jehovah.

It is the object of the Psalmist in this stanza to describe the beginning of God's march to victory, as seen in the history of Israel. He goes back to the exodus from Egypt and borrows Deborah's striking words to prove that the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness were but the beginning of a journey under the immediate leadership of God.

8. Here, as in Ps. xviii, Hab. iii, and elsewhere, storm and

The heavens also dropped at the presence of God:
Even yon Sinai *trembled* at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, 9
Thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.
Thy congregation dwelt therein: 10
Thou, O God, didst prepare of thy goodness for the poor.
The Lord giveth the word: 11

---

earthquake are the tokens of the Divine presence. Compare especially the description of the scene at the giving of the law in Exod. xix. **Yon Sinai:** the demonstrative pronoun is very expressive; it was at that mountain that the Divine manifestation reached its climax. R. V. rightly supplies the verb **trembled** from the first line. The description of the last line loses force from the change of Jehovah to Elohim **the God of Israel.**

9. Render, 'With a bountiful rain, O God, Thou didst besprinkle thine inheritance, and when it was weary Thou didst refresh it.' The rain has been understood of the dropping of the manna (compare Exod. xvi. 4, 'I will rain bread from heaven for you'), of the showers of quails in the wilderness, and again of the preparation of the well-watered land of Canaan to be Israel's home after their wanderings. Neither of these explanations is quite satisfactory. Israel has not yet arrived at Canaan; it is the provision in the wilderness which is being described, and **rain** is best understood of all the manifold blessings received during the journeys of forty years.

10. Congregation, marg. 'troop,' has been variously understood. The word in the Hebrew is ambiguous, like our word 'creatures.' But, though unusual, it may be applied here to Israel as God's living family, needing his care and described in the second line as the **poor,** or the 'afflicted.'

A difficulty arises over the word **therein,** for which no antecedent appears to be expressed. It may be understood (1) of the land of Canaan, as too well-known to need special designation; (2) of the 'inheritance,' i. e. the wilderness, as the temporary dwelling-place of God's people. But it seems best (3) to understand 'inheritance' of the people, i. e. the 'congregation of Israel,' and the word 'therein' will find an antecedent in the sense though not in the grammar. It will then refer generally to that sojourn in the wilderness which is the subject of the whole stanza.

11. A graphic and striking transition to the next stage in God's march to victory. The conquest of Canaan as the Land of

The women that publish the tidings are a great host.
12 Kings of armies flee, they flee:
And she that tarrieth at home divideth the spoil.
13 Will ye lie among the sheepfolds,
As the wings of a dove covered with silver,
And her pinions with yellow gold?

Promise is dealt with in stanza 11–14. R. V. is right in rendering the verb by historic presents, the Lord **giveth**, they **flee**, &c. It is enough for God to give the word: He speaketh, and it is done. The foe and the battle are not described, the next sound that we hear is the song of the women celebrating the victory. For examples of this compare Miriam's song with the timbrel in Exod. xv. 20, Deborah's song in Judges v, and the rejoicings of the women over David's slaughter of Goliath in 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7.

12. This verse and the two that follow are understood by some commentators as extracts from old traditional war-songs, such as that of Deborah. This theory would help to explain the obscurity of verses 13 and 14, and verse 12 might well form part of such a paean. But it is simpler to understand it as part of the Psalmist's own graphic word-painting. This is the only case in which *tsebaoth*, the word here translated **armies**, and used in the title 'Jehovah of hosts,' is applied to heathen forces. The reference is to the Kings of Canaan mentioned in Judges v. 19, and the division of the spoil is vividly described in verse 30.

13. The difficulty of this verse arises from its brevity and the use of ellipsis. The phrase of A. V. 'lien among the pots' points to Israel's servitude in Egypt, which is supposed to be contrasted with the brightness and happiness of their sojourn in the Promised Land. But it is now generally agreed that it should be rendered **lie among the sheepfolds,** with an allusion to Reuben's 'sitting among the sheepfolds to listen to the piping of the flocks' in Judges v. 16. The figure of the dove basking in the sunshine, with the light upon her wings gleaming like gold and silver, is also generally understood as describing a delightful condition of peace and prosperity. But the question is, how to fit in these references with the context. R. V. understands this verse to contain an indignant remonstrance, like that of Deborah against Reuben, **will ye lie** in such delicious but inglorious ease enjoying the brilliant sunshine of prosperity, instead of coming to the help of the Lord against the mighty? But such a reproof, richly deserved in Judges v, seems here uncalled for and meaningless. Kirkpatrick renders, 'Though ye may lie,' understanding the connexion of thought to be, that though some Israelites might be

When the Almighty scattered kings therein, 14
It was as when it snoweth in Zalmon.
A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan; 15
An high mountain is the mountain of Bashan.

---

careless and slothful, *yet* the dove's wings are covered with silver, &c., i. e. God gives the blessings of prosperity in spite of man's unfaithfulness.

Better, in our judgement, is the rendering of R. V. marg. 'When ye lie among the sheepfolds, It is as the wings,' &c., i. e. after the victories described in verse 12 have been gained, idyllic prosperity may be enjoyed, life is tranquil, and the colours of the landscape brilliant. 'Israel is God's turtle-dove, and accordingly the new prosperity is compared to the play of colour on the wings of a dove basking in the sunshine,' Delitzsch.

14. Another obscure verse, probably containing allusions intelligible to contemporaries, but not to us. The name *Shaddai*, **Almighty,** rare in the Psalter, perhaps points to this verse being a fragment of an early poem.

therein means in the land of Canaan, but this word may also go to show that the line is torn from another context.

It was as when **it snoweth in Zalmon.** R. V. has supplied certain words to indicate that a simile is intended. The comparison may be to the whitening of many bones upon the plains, or to the scattering of all kinds of equipments abandoned in hurried flight, or to the rush of troops and leaders in headlong confusion, like the whirling of snowflakes in a storm. The marginal rendering, 'It snowed in Zalmon,' implies that a literal storm took place, like the hailstorm at Beth-horon recorded in Joshua x. 11, which helped to complete the rout. This, however, is prosaic; the explanation of R. V. text is much to be preferred, and is adopted here without a discussion of the scores of other interpretations that have been given to the verse, the enumeration of which would only perplex the reader.

Zalmon is the name of a wooded hill near Shechem, see Judges ix. 48. The word means 'dark'—compare Montenegro, Schwarzwald, and the Black Mountains of Wales—and if this particular mountain be intended, it is perhaps mentioned as furnishing a striking background for the snow-scene.

15. The Psalmist proceeds to describe the capital of the newly-conquered land, the place where God deigned to fix His abode. It was not such a spot as might have been expected, Mount Hermon, for instance, that glorious 'mountain of summits' (R. V. marg.), with its three peaks more than 9,000 feet high, which in its majesty looks down upon Bashan and dominates the whole

16 Why look ye askance, ye high mountains,
At the mountain which God hath desired for his abode?
Yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.
17 The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands:
The Lord is among them, *as in* Sinai, in the sanctuary.
18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led *thy* captivity captive;

---

north of Palestine. The legends of many countries locate the abode of the gods among the mountains, Olympus, for example, but Jehovah has chosen a comparatively insignificant hill for His dwelling-place.

16. The loftier mountains are represented as looking enviously upon the humble Zion, the place of which God said, 'This is my resting-place for ever: Here will I dwell; for I have desired it,' Ps. cxxxii. 14. The rendering of A. V. 'Why leap ye?' P. B. V. 'Why hop ye so, ye high hills?' follows the Targum, which is almost certainly in error. The word occurs only here, but other ancient versions have for the most part caught the right meaning, 'Why look ye jealously?'

17. The glory of the Conqueror in His triumphal entry is described. His chariots are 'myriad-fold': *lit.* 'two myriads,' but this does not mean, as in R. V., exactly 20,000, the dual being used distributively = 'reckoned by myriads.' The next clause, **even thousands upon thousands,** repeats the idea in another form. A. V. again follows the Targum in its mention of 'angels,' but with a reminiscence of the 'myriads of holy ones' in Deut. xxiii. 2; but there is no foundation for this in the Hebrew.

The last clause of the verse is somewhat difficult. The device of A. V. and R. V., adding the words 'as in' is permissible, but it mars the simplicity of the original which runs, **The Lord is among them, Sinai is in the sanctuary!** (See marg.). Perowne and others slightly alter the text and read 'is come from Sinai into the sanctuary,' but the emendation is tame and unnecessary. The meaning is that all the sacredness of Sinai, and more, is to be found in this holy place, where God has taken up, not a temporary halting-place as at Sinai, but a permanent abode, to dwell in it for ever.

18. The climax of the Conqueror's glory. He takes His place upon the throne and receives homage on all hands. In the second clause render, 'Thou hast led captive thy captives': the abstract word 'captivity' does not give the meaning. These prisoners

Thou hast received gifts among men,
Yea, *among* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might
dwell *with them*.

Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burden, 19
Even the God who is our salvation. [Selah
God is unto us a God of deliverances; 20
And unto JEHOVAH the Lord belong the issues from death.

---

are the heathen enemies of Israel and of God; the ascending on high is metaphorical, and may either represent God, as it were, returning to heaven, or the winding of the triumphal procession up the hill of Zion.

The Victor receives gifts [from] **among men**, not 'for men,' A. V. All are subject to His sway and pay tribute, even **the rebellious** heathen show this mark of submission, 'that Jah Elohim might dwell there,' i. e. undisturbed, His power unquestioned, in Zion.

St. Paul in Eph. iv. 8 uses this passage, not quoting it exactly, but adapting it for his purpose—as some think, following a current Rabbinical paraphrase in the clause 'gave gifts unto men.' In N. T. Christ is the conqueror who, after His ascension, did not so much exact homage as scatter largesse among His subjects, His gifts being the equipment of His Church with faithful officers and leaders. The apostle preserves and heightens the significance and spirit of the Psalmist's utterance while departing from its literal phraseology.

19. The review of the past is over. God is enthroned in Zion, and the Psalmist breaks forth in praise to Him for what He is and will be to His people.

The rendering of A. V. 'loadeth with benefits' does not give the meaning, which is, as R. V. text gives it, 'who daily beareth for us' (our burden), or as some ancient versions and modern expositors render it, 'who daily beareth us!' Compare, for the word, Isa. xlvi. 3, 4, also for the thought, Ps. xxviii. 9 'bear them up for ever,' and Isa. lxiii. 9. To load with benefits is gracious; to bear another's burden implies closer sympathy; but to bear and carry the heavy-laden and suffering themselves is Divine!

20, 21. Two names of God are joined in the second line. The word **God** is printed in A. V. in capitals, to show that the sacred name 'Jehovah' should be read. Israel at the time of the Psalmist's writing needed a deliverer who could command **the issues** or 'means of escape from death.' They were in danger from cruel foes whom God would punish in their wickedness, however

21 But God shall smite through the head of his enemies,
The hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his guiltiness.
22 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan,
I will bring *them* again from the depths of the sea:
23 That thou mayest dip thy foot in blood,
That the tongue of thy dogs may have its portion from *thine* enemies.
24 They have seen thy goings, O God,
Even the goings of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.
25 The singers went before, the minstrels followed after,
In the midst of the damsels playing with timbrels.
26 Bless ye God in the congregations,

---

proud their strength. This is the meaning of what is to us a curious phrase, **the hairy scalp of such an one,** &c. An allusion to the long flowing hair in which warriors delighted as a mark of strength is found in Deut. xxxii. 42, 'the hairy head of the enemy,' R. V. marg.

22, 23. The object of the verb **bring again** is not, as the older interpreters supposed, God's own people, but their enemies. They might hide among the basaltic rocks and fastnesses of Bashan, they might plunge into the very depths of the sea, but they should not escape condign punishment. The form in which this punishment is to be inflicted, revolting as it is to our ideas, was sadly familiar in early times, and the phraseology 'the dogs shall lick the blood of their slain' was proverbial for righteous vengeance. See Ps. lviii. 10.

24. A festal procession to the temple is described in 24–27. But it is not to be confused with the going up of the King in verse 17. He is enthroned, and has celebrated his victory over the enemy, and now comes the rejoicing of the people, who solemnly present their thanksgivings in the sanctuary. 'Israel's festival of victory is regarded as a triumphal procession of God Himself,' Delitzsch. 'They have seen' is to be understood impersonally; the sacred splendour has been visible to all eyes.

25. In a Psalm so full of allusions to other Scriptures we may understand this verse as intentionally presenting a parallel to Exod. xv. 20, in which Miriam and the women celebrated the deliverance at the Red Sea with timbrels and dances.

26. Bless ye God, &c., the words of the hymn sung, 'Ye that are **of the fountain of Israel':** i. e. who derive your birth from

Even the Lord, *ye that are* of the fountain of Israel.
There is little Benjamin their ruler, 27
The princes of Judah *and* their council,
The princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.

Thy God hath commanded thy strength: 28
Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.
Because of thy temple at Jerusalem 29
Kings shall bring presents unto thee.

---

the patriarch; compare Isa. xlviii. 1, 'which are come forth out of the waters of Judah.' Some understand Zion, or the temple, to be the 'fountain' in question. The P. B. V. renders 'from the ground of the heart,' a suggestive phrase which has influenced religious literature, but which is quite foreign to the meaning. It is based on the meaning of fountain as origin or ultimate source, the words 'of the heart' being supplied.

27. Four tribes take part in the procession; Benjamin and Judah represent the south, and Zebulun and Naphtali—so honourably prominent in the song of Deborah which this Psalmist is continually recalling—stand for the northern tribes. They are not chosen as the strongest and most influential, but as being specially exposed to invasion and brave in repelling it. Compare Isa. ix. 1, where the region named after these tribes is first 'brought into contempt' then 'made glorious.'

little Benjamin, the youngest son and the smallest tribe, **their ruler** furnishing the first king, Saul. **Their council** or 'company': *lit.* 'crowd,' since Judah was the largest or most numerous tribe.

28. Better, with all the ancient versions, 'O God command Thy strength; Be strong, O God, Thou that hast wrought for us' (R. V. marg.). This avoids the awkward interpolation of an address to Israel. The Psalmist recognizes the Divine might and its manifestation in the past, praying that again it may be put forth for present needs.

29. The first clause is difficult. The opening preposition properly means 'from,' not **because of,** and one explanation is to attach the clause 'from Thy temple' to the preceding verse (R. V. marg.). But this disturbs the balance of clauses and implies an unusual meaning for the preposition **at,** properly 'over'; it would have to be translated 'up to Jerusalem' (Perowne). Another explanation (Cheyne) draws a distinction between the holy place, which the kings might enter and *from* which they

30 Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds,
The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples,
Trampling under foot the pieces of silver;
He hath scattered the peoples that delight in war.
31 Princes shall come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God.
32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth;
O sing praises unto the Lord; [Selah
33 To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which are of old;
Lo, he uttereth his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.

---

offer presents. No translation is free from a slight awkwardness, but the general meaning is clear.

30. wild beast of the reeds: the hippopotamus, symbolically representing Egypt, the behemoth of Job xl. 15, 21. A. V. 'the company of spearmen' follows certain Jewish interpreters, but the more correct translation is given in the image.

bulls . . . calves: the leaders of the nations with their followers. **Trampling under foot the pieces of silver** means that God in rebuking these haughty foes should disdain to accept the offerings they bring to avert His wrath. The translation of A. V. and R. V. marg. 'Every one submitting himself,' &c., makes better sense, but is grammatically doubtful. Baethgen, Cheyne, and others abandon the text as corrupt, and it is useless here to discuss emendations, since there is none obvious or generally accepted.

In the last line A. V., with some ancient versions, reads 'scatter Thou'; so R. V. marg., and this rendering is to be preferred. R. V. text **He hath scattered** must be understood as a confident anticipation of what God will do.

31. Princes: a peculiar word found here only. A kindred word in lxxviii. 31 means 'fat ones'; we should say 'great ones,' magnates, dignitaries.

Ethiopia, Heb. 'Cush,' P. B. V. 'the Morians' land,' often stands in O. T. for distant and little-known peoples. 'When Cush submits, the world is won.'

32. The thoughts of the Psalm are now gathered up in a closing stanza. All the nations of the earth are summoned to join in praising the God whose triumph has been described at length.

33. In verse 4 God rides through the deserts, now He is supreme

Ascribe ye strength unto God: 34
His excellency is over Israel,
And his strength is in the skies.
O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places: 35
The God of Israel, he giveth strength and power unto *his* people.
Blessed be God.

For the Chief Musician; set to Shoshannim. *A Psalm* of David. **69**
Save me, O God; 1

---

in the eternal heavens. His mighty voice has spoken, all peoples cannot choose but hear.

34. Let them then acknowledge two things—God's special goodness to Israel, and his dominion in heaven and earth.

35. A final ascription of praise on the part of the Psalmist. Such a Psalm should end with a doxology. Render:—

'Terrible art Thou, O God, from Thy sanctuary, Thou God of Israel:
He it is who giveth strength and abundance of might to His people.
Blessed be God!'

Psalm LXIX. Prayer of the Suffering Servant of God.

After a paean, a plaintive cry. The writer of this Psalm is in unusually deep affliction, and it is because of his fidelity to truth and to God that he suffers. Like Ps. xxii, this is a passion-Psalm; as in it, trouble changes into triumph and prayer to praise. The two Psalms breathe in several respects the spirit of the N. T., and are often quoted both in Gospels and Epistles. But the differences between the Old Covenant and the New are no less manifest, and these must not be ignored or slighted in exposition.

It is impossible to determine date and authorship, but it is easier than usual to form probable conjectures, and interpreters are for once fairly well agreed in their judgement. The period which best represents the conditions is that of Jeremiah, and some leading critics would ascribe the Psalm to the prophet himself. Davidic authorship is out of the question: even Delitzsch says that in Pss. xl and lxix Jeremiah 'poured forth his emotions in the form of Davidic Psalms, and perhaps also gave them Davidic titles.' The language of the Psalm presents several detailed coincidences with that of Jeremiah, which are pointed out in the notes. The

For the waters are come in unto my soul.
2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing:
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

---

general conditions of Psalmist and prophet are very similar, notably that each is suffering as martyr or confessor, being misunderstood and misrepresented, not only by fellow countrymen, but by his nearest friends. Compare especially Jer. xi, xv, xvii, xx. Deep and tender feeling characterizes both writers, both exhibit wounded but invincible faith, both anticipate spiritual benefit to result to the nation and the individual from the period of sharp trial through which they are passing. We may say with Kirkpatrick, 'If Jeremiah was not the author, it must have been some prophet of a kindred temper of mind under very similar circumstances.' The conditions are quite fairly met if we suppose the writer to have been a later Psalmist, during or after the Exile, who was imbued with the spirit and familiar with the writings of his great predecessor. Jeremiah was one of the finest and most sorely tried spirits among all the heroes of the O. T. Caricatured as he was in his lifetime, and by later tradition known as 'the weeping prophet,' a mere utterer of 'jeremiads,' this saint and martyr was a man as strong as he was sensitive, as brave as he was tender. Perhaps it may truly be said that Jeremiah, in spite of his faults, was one of the most Christ-like of all the servants of God under the Old Covenant. This Psalm should be read throughout with Jeremiah in mind; whether he wrote it or not, his history gives the key to its meaning.

The Psalm may be divided into five parts. In the first stanza, verses 1–6, the Psalmist pleads his sad case; in 7–12 he describes its cause and the cruel conduct of those who ought to have helped him; in 13–18 he repeats his earlier plea in stronger language. Turning once again to his persecutors, his indignation burns more fiercely against them, and he breathes dire and bitter imprecations upon them 19–28; whilst in the closing stanza he anticipates the deliverance for the afflicted which God will accomplish and the glory to His holy name which will accrue when His salvation fully appears, 29–36.

For the title **set to Shoshannim**, i. e. 'the tune of the Lilies,' see Introd. p. 16, and compare Ps. xlv.

1. For water-floods as a symbol of danger, see Pss. xviii. 16, xxxii. 6; **come in unto my soul** means threaten my very life.

2. deep mire: *lit.* 'mud of the gulf' or abyss. In time of flood there are two dangers, one of sinking into morass or quicksand, the other of being swept away by the strong current of water. The Psalmist mentions both of these perils. It would be misleading to take the phrase literally and to refer it to that dungeon or pit

I am weary with my crying; my throat is dried: 3
Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.
They that hate me without a cause are more than the 4
hairs of mine head:
They that would cut me off, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty:
Then I restored that which I took not away.
O God, thou knowest my foolishness; 5
And my sins are not hid from thee.
Let not them that wait on thee be ashamed through me, 6
O Lord GOD of hosts:
Let not those that seek thee be brought to dishonour through me, O God of Israel.
Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; 7
Shame hath covered my face.
I am become a stranger unto my brethren, 8
And an alien unto my mother's children.

---

of Malchijah, in which Jeremiah was imprisoned and sank into the mire, Jer. xxxviii. 6. The figure of the text pictures a wider destruction than the foul mud at the bottom of a pit.

3. The exhaustion, the parching of the throat, the failure of sight through grief and weeping, are mentioned in other Psalms, see vi. 6, 7, xxii. 15, xxxviii. 10, cxix. 82, &c.

4. His foes are many and strong. They treated the Psalmist as the wolf accused the lamb in the fable; the last line should be rendered, 'What I never took away, that I had to restore.' The phrase is to be understood rather proverbially than literally of one who was slandered as well as oppressed, and robbed under the pretext of making him restore ill-gotten gains.

5. My foolishness . . . my sins: such confession is not always made by the Psalmists in their sufferings; sometimes they confidently plead their own integrity. Jeremiah, however, constantly casts himself upon the omniscience of God, and prays that the All-knowing and All-pitying will help him, Jer. xv. 15; xvii. 16, &c.

6, 7. However unworthy the Psalmist may be, his cause is bound up with that of God's people and of God Himself. It is for his Master's sake that he has borne reproach, and he pleads that God for His own sake will deliver him.

8. By the innermost circle of friends and family he has been

9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;
And the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me.
10 When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting,
That was to my reproach.
11 When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a proverb unto them.
12 They that sit in the gate talk of me;
And *I am* the song of the drunkards.
13 But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time:
O God, in the multitude of thy mercy,

---

betrayed and abandoned. 'My own mother's children' are of closer kin than **my brethren,** who may be only the sons of the same father, or more distantly related.

9. Jeremiah is a striking example of the complete identification of the servant of God with the cause of God, and of the consuming desire which burns away the very life of the true devotee—whom men call a fanatic. See Jer. xx. 9. **Thine house** may refer literally to the temple and its threatened profanation, or to the church-nation generally, as in Jer. xi. 15, xii. 7.

But for the perfect illustration of these words we must turn to N. T. The first half of this verse is quoted in John ii. 17, the second half in Rom. xv. 3: Christ's disciples during His lifetime, and Paul after His death, alike found in this verse an apt description of the spirit in which the Son of Man and Son of God did and suffered the Father's will.

10-12. An illustration of the way in which these bitter reproaches for righteousness' sake tortured the tender spirit of the sufferer. Overwhelmed with shame and sorrow for the nation's sins, he publicly fasted and mourned. This action of his and its cause were alike the subject of mockery, and further discredit was brought upon religion, as the drunkards blasphemed the name of God in making sport of His servant.

In the gate, the place of public concourse; they who sit there are the idle loafers, 'men of the market place,' described in Acts xvii. 5 as 'vile fellows of the rabble.' For the habitual drunkards of the time see Isa. v. 11, 12.

13. This Abdiel, faithful among the faithless, has, however, a sure refuge. Compare Ps. civ. 9, 'But I give myself unto prayer,' *lit.* 'I am prayer.' The clause **In an acceptable time,** or

Answer me in the truth of thy salvation.
Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: 14
Let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.
Let not the waterflood overwhelm me, 15
Neither let the deep swallow me up;
And let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.
Answer me, O LORD; for thy loving-kindness is good: 16
According to the multitude of thy tender mercies turn thou unto me.
And hide not thy face from thy servant; 17
For I am in distress; answer me speedily.
Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: 18
Ransom me because of mine enemies.
Thou knowest my reproach, and my shame, and my 19 dishonour:
Mine adversaries are all before thee.

'in a time of favour,' corresponds with **in the multitude of thy mercy,** and a plea lurks in the heart of each. The last clause, 'with the truth of thy salvation,' might be paraphrased 'by the exercise of that saving power which Thou wilt faithfully put forth in Thine own time.'

14, 15. Prayer to be delivered from the evils mentioned in verse 2, with the addition **let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.** Some commentators explain this of the mouth of a well; if the orifice be closed, a man at the bottom would be literally buried alive. It is better, however, to understand the word generally as = the grave, or 'pit of destruction,' Ps. lv. 23.

16-18. Seven petitions based substantially on three pleas. (1) Thou art so good, so full of lovingkindness: (2) I thy servant am in such sore trouble, Thou canst not desert me: (3) My enemies will triumph if my prayer is unanswered, and the sacred Name will be correspondingly dishonoured. Thus does the suppliant know how to gather arguments from the nature of God, from his own straits, and from the conditions of life around him.

19. He returns to the theme of his woes with deepened feeling, which increases as this stanza proceeds. But it is to plead them as already lying in the very spirit of God—**Thou knowest!**

20 Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness:
And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none;
And for comforters, but I found none.
21 They gave me also gall for my meat;
And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.
22 Let their table before them become a snare;
And when they are in peace, *let it become* a trap.
23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not;
And make their loins continually to shake.
24 Pour out thine indignation upon them,

20. Almost the words of Jeremiah. Compare xxiii. 9, where the prophet complains 'my heart is broken,' and enlarges on the prevalent wickedness which has made his brain giddy, as well as his heart sore.

21. A proverbial expression to describe the adding of insult to injury. **Gall**—perhaps the poppy—a bitter and poisonous plant for his food, **vinegar**—sour and unwholesome wine—to drink. That is, the sufferings of the hungry and thirsty are treated with mockery, the original cruelty is multiplied tenfold by the scorn which pours poison into the wound.

This verse is alluded to in the narratives of the sufferings of Christ upon the cross, see Matt. xxvii. 34 and John xix. 28. The 'fulfilment' of Scripture referred to must not be understood as the accomplishment of a direct prophecy, nor even as the correspondence of a perfect type, but rather as the complete realization of the spirit, and to some extent the details, of this Psalm in the case of a Perfect and Spotless Sufferer.

22. Those who would too closely press the typical relation between the Psalmist and our Lord must be arrested by this verse. The imprecations which extend to the end of verse 28 are amongst the darkest and fiercest in the Psalter. The gulf which separates these verses from 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do' marks the impassable limits of typology.

The form of imprecation in this verse is suggested by the figures of 21. May they be seized in the midst of their unhallowed enjoyments, and their very security prove their ruin? St. Paul quotes this and the next verse in Rom. xi. 9, mainly following the LXX.

23. The darkening of the eyes and trembling of the limbs are signs of weakness, perhaps paralysis.

24, 25. The Divine wrath is to overtake their families as well

And let the fierceness of thine anger overtake them.
Let their habitation be desolate; 25
Let none dwell in their tents.
For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; 26
And they tell of the sorrow of those whom thou hast wounded.
Add iniquity unto their iniquity: 27
And let them not come into thy righteousness.
Let them be blotted out of the book of life, 28
And not be written with the righteous.
But I am poor and sorrowful: 29
Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

---

as themselves. Modern mercy spares as far as possible the helpless dependents of a criminal; the Oriental thinks of punishment as incomplete if it does not involve the household. St. Peter quotes this verse in reference to Judas, Acts i. 20, following the LXX, but adapting the passage for his own purpose.

26. The ground of all these terrible maledictions is that these evil men were not simply cruel to a brother-man, but took sides against God, would not recognize His chastening hand, but turned as it were good into evil by maltreating the suffering servant of God. Compare Isa. liii. 4. LXX reads 'they add to the sorrow of him whom Thou hast smitten,' this was the worst part of the offence.

27, 28. The climax of imprecation. **The book of life,** better 'the book of the living' (marg.), must not be understood in the N. T. sense with reference to a future state, Rev. xx. 12. The most instructive parallels are Isa. iv. 3, 'written among the living in Jerusalem,' and Dan. xii. 1. Moses also refers to 'the book which thou hast written.' The idea is that of a register of the true citizens in the city of God, and the names of these men are not to be found enrolled in it. Death and deprivation of all the privileges of Israelites are implied in this curse, and the force of imprecation at the time could go no further. The expedients which have been devised for softening the meaning of these awful curses must, we fear, be pronounced vain. The dark words stand; their relation to the ethics and theology of the O. T. is discussed in the Introduction to vol. ii of this work.

29. That the Psalmist could breathe such dire prayers with a good conscience is clear from this and the following verses. With

30 I will praise the name of God with a song,
And will magnify him with thanksgiving.
31 And it shall please the LORD better than an ox,
Or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs.
32 The meek have seen it, and are glad:
Ye that seek after God, let your heart live.
33 For the LORD heareth the needy,
And despiseth not his prisoners.
34 Let heaven and earth praise him,
The seas, and every thing that moveth therein.
35 For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah;
And they shall abide there, and have it in possession.
36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it;
And they that love his name shall dwell therein.

---

a certain complacency he contemplates his own position, though he is 'afflicted and in pain.' He is as confident that God will deliver him as he is that the evil-doers shall be terribly punished.

30, 31. In the same breath with his imprecations upon his enemies he offers thanksgiving to God, assured that such spiritual sacrifice will be well-pleasing to Him. The reference to **horns and hoofs** of the bullock shows that the animal is fit for sacrifice —possessing horns and cleaving the hoof—of full age, and belonging to the class accounted 'clean,' Lev. xi.

32, 33. Render:—

'When the meek see this, they are glad;
Ye that seek after God, let your heart revive.'

The Psalmist holds that there are two sides in the great world-conflict—on the one hand are ranged the rich and powerful and influential wicked, on the other are the poor and afflicted righteous and—Jehovah. Every deliverance effected by God for one of the latter class puts heart into all the rest.

34–36. The plaintive strain is now entirely lost in rejoicing. The whole universe is to join in a chorus of praise, because in the little corner of the world known as Jerusalem the God of Israel restores and comforts His faithful people. The phrase 'will rebuild the cities of Judah' is one mark of date making the period of Jeremiah the most probable for this Psalm. Cf. Jer. xxxiii. 10, xxxiv. 7. There is no ground for supposing these verses to be a liturgical addition.

For the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David; to bring to remembrance. 70

Make haste, O God, to deliver me; 1
Make haste to help me, O LORD.
Let them be ashamed and confounded 2
That seek after my soul:
Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonour
That delight in my hurt.
Let them be turned back by reason of their shame 3
That say, Aha, Aha.
Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee; 4
And let such as love thy salvation say continually,
Let God be magnified.
But I am poor and needy; 5

PSALM LXX. A CRY FOR HELP.

This fragment, printed as a separate Psalm in Book II, occurs in Book I as Ps. xl. 13–17. The slight variations which distinguish this recension are noted below; for a commentary on the whole see Ps. xl, which, so far as can be judged, preserves the earlier text.

For the title **to bring to remembrance,** marg. 'to make memorial,' see Ps. xxxviii and Introduction, p. 17. The memorial *Azkara* is a technical name either for the offering of incense generally, Isa. lxvi. 3, or for a part of the meal-offering, Lev. ii. 2, or for the offering of the incense which had been placed upon the shewbread, Lev. xxiv. 7. This portion of a Psalm was perhaps detached for liturgical use, and the fact is instructive with regard to the freedom of combination and separation employed by the editors of the Psalter.

1. Make haste, **O God,** &c. We read in xl. 13, 'Be pleased to deliver me': 'make haste,' which is not in the Hebrew, is supplied from the second clause. The name Jehovah is changed to Elohim in the first line, but retained in the second.

3. Let them be turned back, in xl. 15 'Let them be desolate.' The difference in Hebrew is of one letter only, and the change may have arisen from confusion. The earlier form reads, 'that say unto me'; the omission of the words 'unto me' points to the adaptation of a personal Psalm to liturgical purposes.

4. The name Jehovah is again changed to Elohim.

5. Instead of 'The Lord thinketh upon me' in xl. 17, the

Make haste unto me, O God:
Thou art my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, make no tarrying.

71 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust:

Elohist reads, **Make haste unto me, O God.** The *I* and *me* of this verse would be understood in public worship of the nation. In the last line the usual process of this book is reversed and 'Jehovah' substituted for 'O my God,' for the sake of variety; the same reason applies to the retention of Jehovah in the second clause of verse 1.

PSALM LXXI. PRAYER OF AN AGED SAINT.

The writer of this Psalm borrows freely from earlier pleadings of a similar kind, especially in Pss. xxii, xxxi, xxxv, and xl. But he gives to his work a character of its own. A mosaic, if made up of small pieces, exhibits them combined into a pattern which they cannot possess separately, and no careful reader of this Psalm will call it 'a mere cento.'

The writer was apparently an old man, see verses 9 and 18. The form of words used, 'old and greyheaded,' 'in old age, when my strength faileth,' seems to preclude the idea that the Psalm was in the first instance a national one; for though a nation has its stages of growth, such phrases are not naturally applied to a community. Verse 20 points obviously to the nation—for the reading, see note. No advocate of the personal element in the Psalms seeks to exclude all national references, but protest is necessary when, as is the case with one school of modern critics, it is sought to exclude the personal element altogether from the religion of the Psalms.

The date is post-Exilic, see verse 20. The LXX has the curious compound title 'of David, of the sons of Jonadab and those who were first carried captive.' If this inscription be not altogether inept, it shows that in the opinion of the editors a 'Davidic' Psalm might also in some sense be a Psalm of the Exile. The reference to the Rechabites, Jer. xxxv, may point to the adaptation, or only to the use made, of an earlier composition. Jeremiah is held to have been the author by Delitzsch, Perowne, and others, and in some respects the hypothesis is probable enough; compare e. g. Jer. i. 5 with verses 5 and 6—but the language of the Psalm is too general to warrant more than conjecture.

Strophical arrangement is lacking, nor is there any close connexion of thought between the verses; verses 1–3, however,

Let me never be ashamed.
Deliver me in thy righteousness, and rescue me: 2
Bow down thine ear unto me, and save me.
Be thou to me a rock of habitation, whereunto I may 3
continually resort:
Thou hast given commandment to save me;
For thou art my rock and my fortress.
Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, 4
Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.
For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: 5
Thou art my trust from my youth.
By thee have I been holden up from the womb: 6
Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels:
My praise shall be continually of thee.

---

constitute an introduction, and verse 14 marks a point of transition from past to future, from sorrow to joy, from prayer to praise.

1. The first three verses are substantially identical with xxxi. 1–3. Render, as in many other cases, 'In thee have I taken refuge.' The latter half of the verse is a prayer, well known as occurring in the last words of the Te Deum, 'Let me never be confounded.'

2. in thy righteousness is the opening clause, and should be emphasized. Only a man with a clear conscience can cast himself upon this attribute of God as a plea in prayer.

3. There is but a 'tittle' of difference in the Hebrew between **rock of habitation** and 'strong rock' (R. V. marg.). The latter is the reading of xxxi. 2, and of LXX, Targ. and other versions, here Baethgen and other critics consider that the reading **whereunto I may continually resort, Thou hast given commandment** (only three words in the Hebrew) has arisen from a corruption of two words which in xxxi. 2 are rendered 'a house of defence.' LXX and Vulg. somewhat favour this supposition; Syr. Targ. and other versions correspond to A. V. and R. V. For the variety of figures employed to describe God as a refuge, compare the opening of Ps. xviii.

5, 6. Compare Ps. xxii. 9, 10. Render in verse 6:—

'On Thee have I been stayed from my birth,
From my mother's womb thou hast been my protector.'

The last word differs slightly from the parallel one in xxii. 10, but

7 I am as a wonder unto many;
But thou art my strong refuge.
8 My mouth shall be filled with thy praise,
And with thy honour all the day.
9 Cast me not off in the time of old age;
Forsake me not when my strength faileth.
10 For mine enemies speak concerning me;
And they that watch for my soul take counsel together,
11 Saying, God hath forsaken him:
Pursue and take him; for there is none to deliver.
12 O God, be not far from me:
O my God, make haste to help me.

---

is translated 'protector' or 'benefactor' by LXX, Vulg., and leading interpreters.

7. a wonder—P. B. V. 'monster,' i. e. a prodigy—**unto many.** In what sense is this to be understood? Ezekiel was to be a sign to the people (xii. 6, 11) in the sense that his acts symbolized the people's fate; compare Isa. viii. 187; Zech. iii. 80. Again, punishment may be 'for a sign and for a wonder' (Deut. xxviii. 46), or as we say, a 'monument' of the justice and wrath of God. But the phrase of Isa. lii. 14, 'many were astonied at thee,' best illustrates the meaning here. The spectacle of the suffering servant of God causes all to wonder, many to fear, and the few faithful ones to revere and trust and bear to the uttermost.

8. The sufferer can understand what others think so strange. So other sufferers, as in the midst of the seven-times heated furnace, or in the stocks at Philippi, have been strengthened, and have even sung praises to God.

9. In spite of this confidence apprehension begins to creep over the Psalmist's spirit. He is old, and while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. Perhaps he anticipates death, and prays that God 'will not suffer him in his last hour for any pains of death to fall from Him.' The application of these words to the nation may the more easily be made, if they are understood to have been intended first of all in a personal sense.

10, 11. Close parallels will be found in Pss. xli. lvi, &c. 'Lay wait for my soul,' i. e. watch to take my life.

12, 13. Compare Ps. xxii, xxxv, xxxviii, xl. Almost the whole of the phraseology of these verses is borrowed.

Let them be ashamed *and* consumed that are adversaries 13
to my soul;
Let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that
seek my hurt.
But I will hope continually, 14
And will praise thee yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of thy righteousness, 15
And of thy salvation all the day;
For I know not the numbers *thereof.*
I will come with the mighty acts of the Lord GOD: 16
I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine
only.
O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; 17
And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.
Yea, even when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake 18
me not;
Until I have declared thy strength unto *the next*
generation,
Thy might to every one that is to come.
Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high; 19

14, 15. Render, 'but as for me, I will,' &c.; a strong contrast is drawn here. The Divine **righteousness** is paralleled with **salvation,** since the Psalmist holds that God is pledged to deliver His faithful servant, see verse 2. **I know not the numbers thereof,** probably suggested by xl. 5.

16. I will come, i. e. into the house of God, **with the mighty acts of the Lord Jehovah,** i. e. as the subject of thanksgiving. The translation of R. V. marg. and A. V., 'I will go in the strength,' &c., does not bring out the meaning of the plural, and misses the parallel with the next clause.

17, 18. Remembrance of the past encourages the Psalmist to pray and trust for the future. He desires to be spared till he has shown God's **strength,** *lit.* 'arm,' i. e. the mighty power with which God supports and protects His people and leads them to victory, **unto** the **generation** (following); compare Ps. xlviii. 13. That this is the meaning is shown by the parallel clause 'every one that is to come.'

Thou who hast done great things,
O God, who is like unto thee?
20 Thou, which hast shewed us many and sore troubles,
Shalt quicken us again,
And shalt bring us up again from the depths of the earth.
21 Increase thou my greatness,
And turn again and comfort me.
22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery,
Even thy truth, O my God:
Unto thee will I sing praises with the harp,
O thou Holy One of Israel.
23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing praises unto thee;
And my soul, which thou hast redeemed.
24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long:

---

19. who is like unto thee? Compare xxxv. 10.

20. Authorities differ as to whether the singular 'me,' or the plural **us** should be read here. The written text (*C'thibh*) of the Hebrew has **us**, but the Jews in reading (*Q'ri*) corrected into 'me' (R. V. marg.). The versions are divided in the second and third lines, but are in favour of 'me' in the first line. There can be little question that the plural gives the meaning. According to the interpretation here adopted, the Psalmist after uttering his own personal experiences turns to the history and hopes of the nation. According to the ideas prevalent amongst many modern critics, the whole Psalm is purely national.

from the depths of the earth: a proverbial phrase for the most distant regions and those most difficult of access, or it may mean, from the direst perils and the very gates of death. The word translated 'depths' properly means 'abyss.' This confidence is justified from the point of view both of personal and national history: but God has His own way of quickening and restoring, quite unexpected either by Israel as a whole or individual Psalmists.

21. In this prayer the individual Israelite undoubtedly represents the nation: its 'greatness' and prosperity will bring personal honour and happiness to the Psalmist.

22-24. The Psalm closes with vows of thanksgiving to the redeeming God. **Holy One of Israel,** a favourite phrase with Isaiah, found only three times in the Psalms. It indicates the

For they are ashamed, for they are confounded, that seek my hurt.

A Psalm of Solomon. 72

Give the king thy judgements, O God, 1

---

moral perfection and uniqueness of that God who has deigned to enter into close covenant-relationship with Israel. The last lines find parallels in xxxv. 4, xl. 14.

PSALM LXXII. THE DOMINION OF THE LORD'S ANOINTED.

The title of this Psalm is rightly given by R. V. as **of Solomon,** not 'for Solomon' (A. V.). Few, however, are now found to support the tradition of Solomonic authorship, though Delitzsch is content to do so—and Perowne with some modifications—with the view that the king is praying for himself, in the strong desire that 'the Messianic ideal might be realized in his person and the Messianic age through his reign.' On the other hand Cheyne, here following Hitzig, would attribute the Psalm to a poet of the third century B.C., the king celebrated in it being Ptolemy Philadelphus. The incredibilities of the latter theory have been touched on in the Introduction to Ps. xlv.

The truth seems to lie midway between these extremes. An actual king of Judah is probably referred to, though it is impossible to decide whether it be Hezekiah or another. And it is the less needful to conjecture, inasmuch as nothing in the Psalm turns upon the personal character or circumstances of the actual occupant of the throne. The Psalm is ideal throughout, 'Messianic' in the sense that God's anointed one is depicted, not as he so often was in fact, but as he ought to be, as the Psalmist hopes he one day will be. Hence prayer merges in prophecy. The Targum interprets throughout of the Messiah, and the Christian Church has freely applied the Psalm to Christ, though, remarkably enough, it is not once quoted in N. T. This glowing description of God's vicegerent on earth is best read without primary reference to Solomon, Hezekiah, or Ptolemy Philadelphus, but as a prophetic prayer, already partly fulfilled after a fashion the Psalmist never expected, partly still awaiting fulfilment—though the time and manner of that ultimate realization are altogether beyond human presage and conjecture.

The Psalm forms one connected whole, but a break may perhaps be found at the end of verse 7, the first section referring to the relation between the king and his own people; verses 8–14 describe the spread of his dominion till it includes the whole earth; verses 15–17 offer sublime prayers for the monarch and

And thy righteousness unto the king's son.
2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness,
And thy poor with judgement.

---

his descendants, while verses 18 and 19 form a doxology to close Book II, and verse 20 is an editorial note which forms no part of the sacred text.

1. That the Psalm is pre-eminently a prayer is made clear by its opening. The name of God occurs only once in it, but this verse governs the whole interpretation. God is asked in the opening petition to grant to the king the power to 'speak as the oracles of God,' that his ordinances and acts of administration—**thy judgements**—and the spirit which prompts and directs them—**thy righteousness**—may be in accordance with the Divine will. In Prov. viii. 15, 16 princes and kings are said to govern by virtue of Divine wisdom: this is the royal ideal in Israel, and the Psalmist prays that it may be realized.

The phrase **the king's son** must be understood as a synonym for the king himself. It is not a prayer for his heir, but the first line of the verse is strengthened by a parallel in the second; compare Prov. xxx. 4, 'What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou knowest?'

2. The chief question of interpretation in this Psalm is the rendering of the tenses, whether the idea is best conveyed by simple futures as in A. V. and R. V., or by optatives 'May be, Let him be!' &c. Most modern commentators adopt the optative throughout. Others consider that the prayers begin in verse 8, where the form of the verb changes, but would use futures in verses 2–7. If verse 1 be a prayer, and the whole Psalm from verse 8 onwards be prayer, it is most natural to understand the intervening verbs also as optative, and this seems to give the meaning of the Psalm best. It may escape attention that R. V. gives the interpretation '*Let him judge,* and so throughout the Psalm,' a place in its margin. From the exegetical point of view this is to be preferred, though the loss in the sacred associations of familiar words is considerable. According to R. V. text, after the opening prayer the Psalmist passes into a direct prophecy of a coming ideal king, which is continued to the close.

The two leading words of verse 1 are repeated, the king is to administer justice to all classes alike. The dangers of oppression under irresponsible Eastern rulers are very great; the temptation to 'crush' and 'grind the face of the poor' is strong. Amos, Isaiah, and other prophets sternly denounce this evil, and the king who dealt out even-handed justice to all was as highly esteemed as he was rare, see verses 4 and 12.

The mountains shall bring peace to the people, 3
And the hills, in righteousness.
He shall judge the poor of the people, 4
He shall save the children of the needy,
And shall break in pieces the oppressor.
They shall fear thee while the sun endureth, 5
And so long as the moon, throughout all generations.
He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: 6
As showers that water the earth.
In his days shall the righteous flourish; 7
And abundance of peace, till the moon be no more.

---

3. Render, 'Let the mountains and the hills bring forth peace for the people—through righteousness.' Peace is represented as the gracious fruit which will grow on every tree and every hill-slope, if righteousness prevail under the rule of a righteous king. Compare Isa. xxxii. 17.

4. A further detailed illustration of the fact that the fullest justice includes kindliness and clemency. It is the duty of the righteous king to crush the oppressor, and so to protect and preserve the needy and those who have no helper.

5. 'May they fear thee.' This cannot of course refer to the king, who is not directly addressed throughout the Psalm. It must mean God, carrying on the prayer of verse 1, but this would break the connexion of thought. Probably LXX and Vulg., followed by several modern commentators, preserve the right text, and we should read:—

> 'May he endure as long as the sun and while the moon doth shine (*lit.* 'in presence of the moon') throughout all generations!'

6. 'Let him be as rain coming down' on meadows newly mown, and therefore prepared to receive showers more readily. The parched roots quickly suck up the refreshing moisture, and even in a few hours the brown plain will be green with verdure. It may be said that it is but a small part of human woes that laws and kings can cause or cure, but an Eastern king can almost by his fiat change desolation into tranquil prosperity—certainly he can do the reverse.

7. In this verse the thought follows that of verse 3, with its mention of righteousness and peace; the figure employed is in continuation of verse 6, showing what kind of plants will flourish in a kingdom thus blessed by showers of royal beneficence;

8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the River unto the ends of the earth.
9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him;
And his enemies shall lick the dust.
10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents:
The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.
11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him:
All nations shall serve him.
12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth;
And the poor, that hath no helper.

---

whilst an echo of verse 5 is found in the note of perplexity, 'till the moon be no more.'

8. The Psalmist passes now from the immediate domain of this righteous ruler, and enlarges his prayer to include the influence which his sway will exercise over surrounding and distant nations.

A change in the form of the verb is noticeable from this verse to the eleventh. **from sea to sea,** that is, according to the promise of Exod. xxiii. 31, from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. 'From the River to the ends of the earth' means from the Euphrates, the eastern boundary of Jewish thought, to the dim unknown western regions which formed the limit in the opposite direction. In 1 Kings iv. 21 Solomon is said to have reigned 'from the River to the border of Egypt,' and see verse 24. Geographical considerations are not to be pressed here; the phraseology is employed, as in Zech. ix. 10, in a proverbial sense, for dominion extended to the bounds of the habitable globe.

9. Various tribes and nations are specified as doing homage to this viceroy of the great king. The wilderness-dwellers are the nomad Bedawin, who call no man master.

10, 11. Tarshish, Tartessus in South Spain, a Phoenician colony, was the great commercial centre of the far west. Her ships were in all waters.

the isles is a general name for the coasts of the Mediterranean; compare Isa. xlii. 4, 12. **Sheba** is a name for South-East Arabia, 1 Kings x. 1. The meaning of **Seba** is more doubtful, but Josephus gives it as the name of the capital of Meroe in Ethiopia. All these regions are to be tributary to the king; 1 Kings iv. shows that Solomon's influence had already been felt in most of them.

12, 13. See notes on verses 2 and 4. The basis of this king's influence rests not on his personal prowess, nor upon the might of

He shall have pity on the poor and needy,
And the souls of the needy he shall save.
He shall redeem their soul from oppression and violence; 14
And precious shall their blood be in his sight:
And they shall live; and to him shall be given of the 15
gold of Sheba:
And men shall pray for him continually;
They shall bless him all the day long.
There shall be abundance of corn in the earth upon the 16
top of the mountains;
The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon:

---

his armies, but upon the blended righteousness and mercifulness of his rule.

14. Read 'from fraud' (R. V. marg.) and **violence**, the two dangers which threaten 'the soul,' i. e. the life, of the poor in ill-governed countries. 'Precious is their blood'—the cheapness of human life in lands where kings do not protect it, and murderers escape easily, is a sadly familiar feature of history in some lands. In Ps. cxvi. 15 the death of saints is said to be thus 'precious' in the sight of God; He watches over their lives and will not lightly let them perish.

15. And they shall live: according to the reading adopted in R. V. text this means the poor men whose lives the King has preserved. But the margin reads 'he,' and it is better to place a full stop at the end of verse 14, and refer each clause in this verse to the King. Render, therefore, 'And so may he long live and may there be given to him . . . may men pray for him continually and bless him all the day!' The latter clauses describe the popular regard which the ruler who thus cares for the best interests of his people is sure to win. The verbs are to be understood impersonally, as equivalent to passives; people shall bring him presents, and prayer for his welfare shall be offered continually, celebrating the virtues which distinguish his reign.

The Hebrew cannot mean 'prayer *unto* him.' This translation, which has found its way into many versions, is a note of the Messianic interpretation of the Psalm which has obtained from the time of the Targum onwards.

16. 'May there be abundance of corn in the land': the rendering 'handful,' A. V. and R. V. marg., is misleading in English, as if the meaning were that a small quantity of grain should multiply

And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

17 His name shall endure for ever;
His name shall be continued as long as the sun:
And men shall be blessed in him;
All nations shall call him happy.

18 Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only doeth wondrous things:
19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever;

---

many fold and the small beginnings of the kingdom have great endings. The prayer is that everywhere, even upon the hill-tops, there may be fertility, the fields of corn waving—or, according to some, 'rustling'—like the great cedars of Lebanon in the wind that sweeps across the mountains. In the last line render, 'And may men spring forth out of the city like grass of the earth.' The country fertile, the cities populous—such is the definition of a nation's prosperity; such was the historian's account of Judah and Israel in the days of Solomon, 'many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry' 1 Kings iv. 20; and such was the Psalmist's hope for the coming age.

17, 18. A sample of the prayers for the king mentioned in verse 15. 'May his name endure for ever!' In the second line the marginal rendering 'have issue' refers to the dynasty, that it may be long perpetuated. The literal rendering of the third line is found in the margin, 'may the nations bless themselves in him.' This alludes to the promise given to Abraham in Gen. xxii. 18, and implies that the king will represent to the nations the very type of perfect prosperity, so that they can pray for nothing better than to be as he is. The passive **be blessed** gives a more obvious meaning and reads more naturally in English, especially when understood in a Messianic sense, but the conjugation is reflexive, and the more exact translation of R. V. marg. should at least be preserved in a note.

18, 19. 'Blessed be Yahweh Elohim, God of Israel.' A doxology appended by the editor to Book II. See xli. 13. Whether the fuller form of the doxology here be due to the fact that it follows so auspicious and glorious a Psalm it is impossible to say. But the devout reader may well think that the large petitions of Ps. lxxii demand a doxology which shall set forth the inexhaustible resources of the God who is asked to do these

And let the whole earth be filled with his glory.
Amen, and Amen.

The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended. 20

---

great things, and that seems to be the point of view from which these verses are written.

Amen, and Amen: the response of the congregation. The people are bidden thus to respond to public prayer and praise in Ps. cvi. 48, and are represented as so doing in Neh. viii. 6.

20. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended. A colophon or note, probably added by the editor of the Elohistic collection, to mark the end of a group of 'Davidic' Psalms. Book III contains only one Psalm 'of David,' lxxxvi, but Books IV and V contain several, which obviously were not known to this compiler. For further remarks on the significance of this note, see Introd. p. 7.

NOTES

Note A. Names of God.

The importance of names in the O. T. must have been noticed by every careful reader. The 'name' in Hebrew is not a mere appellative, it stands for a revelation of nature or character. In the case of the Divine Being, the subject obviously acquires a special importance. The following notes on the subject may be found of use in reading the Psalms.

1. The proper name of the God of Israel, known as the Tetragrammaton, &c., as consisting of the four letters J H V H, occurs nearly 7,000 times in O. T. It was '*the* name,' Lev. xxiv. 11; 'the glorious and fearful name,' Deut. xxviii. 58. The current pronunciation in English, **Jehovah**, is an etymological monstrosity; it consists of the consonants of one Hebrew word and the vowels of another. It has only been in use since the Reformation, but during three centuries has become so familiar as an English word that its retention at present is unavoidable. Controversy has arisen both as to the correct pronunciation and the meaning of J H V H. As to pronunciation, it may be said, in a word, that a general consensus now fixes it as 'Yahwéh,' and as such it is transliterated in this volume.

As to the meaning of the name, an explanation is given in Exod. iii. 14, of which R. V. marg. shows that alternative translations are possible. The derivation there suggested furnishes the meanings 'He who is' or 'He who will be,' thus laying stress on the reality and permanence of the Divine existence and the assurance implied in the name that God will ever be to His people all that they need and all that the idea of a God implies. Critics have objected both to the derivation and explanation given by their sacred writer, but without supplying a satisfactory alternative. It is probable that the name was an ancient one, see Gen. iv. 26; Exod. vi. 20 (if Jochebed = 'Yahweh is glory'), and at the time of Moses it was not so much newly revealed (Exod. vi. 2) as invested with new and specially sacred significance. From this period onwards Yahweh remains the distinctive name for the Covenant God of Israel, who throughout their history takes Israel to Him for a people and is to them a God (Exod. vi. 7).

2. **Elohim** is a generic name for God, occurring between 2,000 and 3,000 times in O. T. It is a plural word, the singular **Eloah** being found fifty-seven times, chiefly in Job, and entirely in poetical passages. It is used of heathen deities, designating either one or many such; also in a secondary sense, of supernatural beings,

translated sometimes as 'angels,' Ps. viii. 5 A. V. and R. V. marg. Compare also Ps. xxix. 1, lxxxii. 6, xcvii. 7, and Job i. 6. The derivation is uncertain, but probably implies an object of reverence or religious awe. The use of the plural has been described as a relic of earlier polytheism, or a proof that other supernatural beings were associated with God, forming a kind of court of the great King; but these contentions have not been established, and it is best understood as a plural of majesty or dignity, familiar in Hebrew and easily intelligible. This word, descriptive of the Deity in general, not the specific God of Israel, came into more frequent use in later times, as a false reverence shrank from the employment of the sacred name.

A kindred word **El** is used more than 200 times in O. T., seventy-three times in the Psalms, usually in poetry. It is supposed to be derived from a root meaning 'the Strong One,' but no certainty can be ascribed to this.

3. **Shaddai** occurs about forty times, chiefly in Job; it is adjectival in form, and is used six times with El. Exod. vi. 3 gives it as the name of God used by the patriarchs. Its derivation is uncertain; the meanings 'sufficient' and 'destroyer' are supported by some, others connect it with an Assyrian root meaning 'to be high.' The traditional meaning 'Almighty' is at least as probable as any of these.

4. **Elyon** occurs more than thirty times in O. T., usually as an appellation with El or Yahweh, sometimes however standing alone. The meaning is unquestionable—God 'Most High'; the Phoenicians appear to have employed a similar word. It is found some twenty times in the Psalms, and is considered by Prof. Cheyne to be a mark of late date. He says 'the Levitical poets have a special predilection for this name,' and in his note on Ps. vii. 18, 'The widening influence of foreign sojourn opened the eyes of the Jews to the usefulness of this ancient word-symbol.' The name was ancient, however, very ancient, if Gen. xiv is to be trusted, and used by non-Israelites (Num. xxiv. 16; Isa. xiv. 14). It would not be safe to regard its use as a criterion of date either in the Psalms or elsewhere.

5. The word **Adonai,** properly a plural with first pronominal suffix, and meaning 'my lord,' is used more than 100 times as a proper name for God; it is the word from which the vowels of 'Jehovah' have been supplied.

6. **Lord of Hosts, Tsebaoth.** The full title is Yahweh, God of hosts, see Hos. xii. 5; the most frequent form is 'Yahweh of hosts,' 'Elohim of hosts' is fairly common, and the title Adonai is sometimes prefixed. This is emphatically the prophetic name of God; out of 282 instances, 246 belong to the prophetical writings. It does not occur in the Pentateuch, and only fifteen times in the Psalms. The earlier meaning of the title had reference to military matters;

God is described as the God of armies, especially the armies of Israel. See Sam. xvii. 45. But in the prophets the hosts are unquestionably celestial, either stars or angels, probably the former, as furnishing a chief proof of the omnipotence and sovereignty of the great Ruler of all, Isa. xl. 26. The LXX understood the word in this sense, and their paraphrase 'The All-Sovereign One' reproduces the prevailing Hebrew idea.

Note B. Use of the term 'Chasid.'

The word in question is an adjective derived from the noun *chesed*, generally rendered 'lovingkindness.' The substantive is chiefly employed to denote the gracious love shown by God to His people, sometimes it describes the kindness of man to man, very rarely the duteous love of man to God. The adjective is found about twenty-five times in the Psalter, only five or six times elsewhere in O. T. So far as its form is concerned, it may have either an active or passive signification, and denote either the man who exercises the quality of *chesed*, i. e. kind, merciful, or one to whom this quality is shown—an object of Divine love and favour. Kirkpatrick, following Hupfeld, argues for the latter meaning, adducing the fact that in fifteen instances the word is found with a pronoun, 'my,' 'thy,' 'his,' i. e. God's *chasidim*, the context favouring the idea that God's grace to His people is intended, rather than their own virtuous dispositions. Most modern critics, however, take the other view, Cheyne translating *chasid* as 'man of love,' and Driver holding that it properly signifies 'kind,' though in later usage it came to denote the 'pious' generally. See an interesting note on the word in his *Parallel Psalter*, p. 443. Schultz, in his *Old Testament Theology*, says that 'the meaning of the word certainly seems to have oscillated between "he who possesses the attribute *chesed*, pius" and "he who experiences the *chesed* of God towards himself," the beloved of God' (ii. 23 note). And Prof. Cheyne marks what he calls the 'specializing use of the term' to denote 'those who responded to God's covenant-love of Israel by obeying His commands at all cost and believing the promises of his torah' (*Bampton Lectures*, p. 117).

In the later portion of Jewish history the word *Chasidim* became the name of a party more or less closely defined. In 1 Macc. ii. 42 we read, 'Then were gathered together unto them a company of Hasidaeans, mighty men of Israel, every one that offered himself willingly for the law. . . . And they mustered a host, and smote sinners in their anger, and lawless men in their wrath.' But it would be an anachronism to read this almost technical meaning of the word into the passages of general import in which it is found in the Psalter; for only in the special sense named is the word 'distinctively Maccabaean.' 'Hasidaean,' like the still later

'Zealot,' is a party name, and marks the incipient degeneration of a noble word.

It is impossible to find a single English word which will exactly cover the area occupied by the Hebrew. A. V. and R. V. employ 'godly,' 'merciful,' 'holy,' and 'saints' as renderings. R. V. uses 'holy' once only, in xvi. 10; 'merciful' once, in xviii. 26 (of God and man); 'gracious' once, in cxlv. 17 (of God); 'godly' six times, and 'saints' sixteen times. The use of 'holy' in A. V. of lxxxvi. 2 is distinctly misleading, and this translation has probably been retained in R. V. of xvi. 10 for special reasons. The meaning 'merciful' is quite exceptional in the Psalter, whilst the phrase 'one whom God favoureth' is employed once only, in xii. 2 (R. V. marg.). We are disposed to think that the Revisers have succeeded admirably in reproducing the shades of meaning in their English renderings of *chasid* from first to last. In iv. 2, the first occasion of its use, the justice of the remark of Schultz quoted above is shown, a measure of ambiguity is unavoidable, but the idea of Divine favour predominates over that of human piety. The prevailing use, however, is fairly represented by 'godly,' whilst in the later Psalms there is a marked tendency to regard such men as forming a recognized class, who may be described as God's 'saints' in the higher and finer meaning of the word. The *chasidim* or 'pious ones' of the Psalter are, therefore, those who, being privileged to enjoy the covenant-love of Jehovah, respond to it by loyal devotion to the will, the worship, and the precepts of their gracious God.

Note C. The Cherubim.

Though this word occurs only thrice in the Psalter—xviii. 10; lxxx. 1; xcix. 1—it seems desirable to give a somewhat fuller account of it than is possible in the notes on individual verses. Its etymology is uncertain. Conjectures connect it with a Syriac word meaning 'strong,' an Assyrian word *Kirubu* which *might* present the analogy of the winged bull of the inscriptions, the Egyptian *xerep*, the Greek *grups*, and our own 'griffin'; but these are little more than guesses from which little light proceeds. Cherubim are mentioned in passages of very various import from Genesis to Ezekiel, in the symbolism of the ark and in the poetry of later Psalmists. They are represented as composite creatures, with the wings of birds and the bodies of terrestrial animals; and thus, combining the strength of the earth with the swiftness of the wind, they aptly symbolize the manifold forces of nature. In this capacity they are described alike in prophetic vision and in sacred art as attending upon the Deity and helping to enhance the glory of His manifested presence. At the same time, no precise shape is assigned to them; the fact that these only of living creatures

were portrayed in the tabernacle and the temple without any violation of the second commandment shows that they were regarded only as ministers of the Most High, while as His ministers they occupied a place in His court, to signify His regal state and perform His behests. In Eden they serve to guard the tree of life; in the ark they cover the mercy-seat with their wings; in the temple more highly elaborated figures were devised for the same purpose, and they were represented in the carved woodwork of the doors and walls (1 Kings vi. 29, 32, 35). In Ezek. xxviii. 14 the prince of Tyre is compared to a cherub as a chosen attendant of God in His holy mountain, and in chs. i and x the prophet's symbolism becomes complex and not easily intelligible, though in these sublime visions the general idea of the cherubim as living forces, bearing up the chariot of Jehovah, waiting on His will, and attending His progress, is impressively conveyed.

The name and idea of these strange creatures may have originated in primitive myth, but in Biblical usage fabulous and superstitious elements have disappeared, while the symbolic meaning remains. In the Psalms the usage is twofold. In xviii. 10 the cherub stands for the swift storm-cloud on which the Divine Being rides when He appears to assert His majesty and deliver His servant; compare civ. 3. In lxxx. 1 and xcix. 1—where a reference is clearly intended to 2 Kings xix. 15; Isa. xxxvii. 16—the Revisers' text reads 'Thou that sittest upon,' and their margin, 'Thou that dwellest between the cherubim.' The former is more literal. The powers of nature form, as it were, a throne on which God is seated (compare xxii. 3); they are present in that abode of glory in which He resides; and from the midst of a cherub-supported throne He dispenses justice and grace alike to His worshippers. This interpretation is borne out by later Rabbinic legends, which describe various orders of angelic beings, cherubim amongst them, whose function it was to support the throne of God or bear up His 'glory' as He passes on His triumphal way.

In reading the Psalms it is important to remember that these references are highly poetical. They were so intended by the writers, and they were so understood by those who in old time read or sang the praises of Israel. Whilst some light upon this obscure subject may be gained by the study of Semitic and other mythologies, the sacred writers have treated it in their own way and stamped it with their own impress, their one object being not to interfere with, but to heighten and emphasize the incomparable majesty of God. And even yet, in divers languages and countries, few nobler or more impressive descriptions can be found of God as abiding in His temple or appearing in the storm than those which speak of Him as 'dwelling between the cherubim,' or which declare that 'He rode upon a cherub and did fly, and came swooping upon the wings of the wind.'

INDEX

Abimelech, 171, 279.
Absalom, 53, 54, 221.
Achish, 171, 279.
Acrostic Psalms, 71, 132.
Addir, 289.
Adonai, 359.
Adullam, 284.
Ahithophel, 216, 273.
Aijeleth hash-Shahar, 16, 118.
Alamoth, 15, 240.
Alexander, Bishop, 117.
Alexander Jannaeus, 50.
Al-muth-labben, 248.
Alphabetic structure, 190.
Al-tashheth, 284.
Ambrose, 42.
Amen, 357.
Anatolius, 83.
Anavim, 172.
Angel of Jehovah, 173.
Antiochus, 152, 221, 301.
Aramaisms, 12.
Artaxerxes Ochus, 230.
Asaph, 254.
Asaphic Psalms, 7.
Ascents, Songs of, 8.
Athanasius, 42.
Augustine, 164.
Azkara, 17, 201.

Baethgen, 86, 138, 178, &c.
Bashan, 121.
Bath-sheba, 162.
Benjamin, 335.
Beth-horon, 179.

Calvin, 83.
Chanith, 178.
Chasid, 57, 92, 360.
Cherubim, 100, 361.
Cheyne, 51, 75, 87, 97, 117, 162, &c.
Chiasmus, 309.
Chronicles, Book of, 21.
Chrysostom, 42.
Chuppah, 109.
Columba, 174.
Coverdale, 86.
C'thibh, 350.

Davidic Psalms, 23.
Deborah, 20.
Dedication of house, 17.
Dedication, feast of, 152.
Delitzsch, 26, 117, 148.
Distich, 34.
Divine names, 204, 205, 285, 293, 327.
Doeg, 266, 267.
Driver, 23, &c.
Duhm, 26.

Edom, 296.
Eduth, 110.
El, 107.
Elim, 149.
Eloah, 358.
Elohim, 70, 137, 210, 220, 254, 255, 358.
Eloi, 119.
Elyon, 68, 100, 243, 359.
Ethan, 11, 206.
Ethiopia, 336.
Ewald, 133, 138, &c.
Ezra, 152.

Faithfulness, 214.
Fool, 84.

Gittith, 15, 69.

Hagiographa, 5.
Hallel, 8.
Handbreadths, 208.
Hebron, 284.
Heman, 11, 206.
Heykāl, 59.
Hezekiah, 191.
Higgaion, 15, 74.
Hiram, 238.
Hupfeld, 269, 277, 324, &c.
Hyssop, 263.

Imprecatory Psalms, 177, 342.
Isles, 354.

Jashar, Book of, 30.
Jeduthun, 206, 304.
Jehovah, 358.
Jeremiah, 62, 177, &c.
John Hyrcanus, 231.
Jonah, 157.
Jonathan, 83.
Jonath-elem rechokim, 16.
Judah, Wilderness of, 307.

Kadesh, 150.
Kalil, 266.
Kay, 315.
Keren, 98.
Kinnor, 167, 287.
Kirkpatrick, 120, 125, 185, 224, 307, 338, &c.
Korah, 220.
Korahitic Psalms, 7.

Lamech, Song of, 31.
Lamentations, 20.
Lilies, 234.
Lord of Hosts, 131, 132, 241.
Loves, Song of, 234.
Lovingkindness, 214.
Luther, 240.

Maccabaean Psalms, 26, 27, 227.
Maccabaeus, Judas, 152.
Maclaren, 51, 163.
Magēn, 61, 98.
Magor-Missabib, 155, 159.
Mahalath, 16.
Marriage, Song of, 232.
Maschil, 16, 162, 221, 234, 267, 271.
Massoretic text, 19, 223.
Matsur, 98.
Mediterranean, 354.
Meek, the, 194.
Menuchah, 126.
Messianic Psalms, 114.
Metre, 34.
Micah, 180.
Michtam, 16, 89, 284.
Milton, 67.
Minchah, 213.
Misgab, 98.
Mishpatim, 110.
Mitzvah, 110.
Mizar, 224.
Mizmor, 4, 53.
Moses, Song of, 20, 169.
Muth-labben, 16.
Musician, chief, 14, 56.

Nathan, 98.
Nebhel, 167, 287.
Neginoth, 15.
Nehiloth, 15.
Ne'um, 186.

'Olah, 213, 266.
Olshausen, 186.
Ophir, 237.
Ornan, 151.

Parallelism, 35.
Parasha, 47.
Pekudim, 110.
Penitential Psalms, 62, 200, 260.
Perowne, 83.
Persian influence, 89.

Praises, 119.
Psalms of Solomon, 10.
Psalterion, 167.
Ptolemy Philometor, 324.
Ptolemy Philadelphus, 233, 351.

Q'ri, 350.
Qinah, 109.

Rabshakeh, 230, 246.
Remembrance, to bring to, 245.
Rhyme, 33.
Riddles, 32.
Robertson Smith, 6, 15, 18, 87, 261, &c.
Royal Psalms, 22.

Sabbath Day, Song for, 18.
Sacrifice, 213.
Sagar, 178.
Saul, 79, 181.
Seba, 354.
Sela', 98.
Selah, 14, 74, 113, 164, 277.
Sennacherib, 239.
Septuagint, 39.
Shachath, 91.
Shakespeare, 108.
Sheba, 354.
Shelamim, 188.
Sheminith, 15.
Sheol, 63, 74, 91, 92, 154.
Shepherd, 125, 127.
Shoshannim, 16, 338.
Shushan Eduth, 297.
Shiggaion, 16, 64.
Shir, 4, 151.
Siloah, 241.
Simon, 112, 301.
Sinai, 332.
Sirach, son of, 197.
Sirion, 150.
Solomon, 50, 351.
Songs, 322.
Spear, 178.
Stanley, 129, 245.
Stanza, 34.
Sternhold and Hopkins, 41.
Stranger, 210.
Stringed instruments, 322.
Strophe, 34.

Tabernacles, 322.
Targum, 40, 121, 279, 280, 320.
Tarshish, 354.
Tate and Brady, 41.
Tehillim, 4.
Te Deum, 171.
Tertullian, 42.
Theodore of Mopsuestia, 112.
Torah, 110.
Tsur, 98.

Uriah, 265.

Versions, 40.

Watson, W., 76.
Well, Song of, 31.
Wellhausen, 101.
Westcott, 236.
Wisdom, 85.

Yahweh, 69, 107, 210, 220, 255, &c.
Yir'ah, 110.

Zalmon, 331.
Zebach, 213.
Ziklag, 161.
Ziphites, 271.
Zophar, 192.

OXFORD: HORACE HART
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01088 4882

DATE DUE

DEMCO 38-297